

VOLUME SIXTY-SEVEN

V THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL



PAGE 102

PAKISTAN, A HURTING LAND

Building Too Low

A lady sat at her window one bright, balmy spring morning. She saw a little bird that had chosen a rosebush for its home and was very busy bringing in sticks and hair and feathers and other material to make its house.

“Ah, you pretty little creature,” said the lady, “you are building too low. Soon the destroyer will come and break up your sweet home.”

And so it was... The days passed by; the nest was finished, and then there were eggs in the nest, and then four great big mouths were open whenever the low chirp of the mother announced that she had something for them to eat.

One day the lady sat by the window sewing. Suddenly she heard the cry of the birds in the deepest distress, and she looked out to see what was the matter. There was a great snake that had crawled up and was devouring the helpless little ones, while just above them the poor, heartbroken mother fluttered about in the wildest distraction. But it was too late; her children were gone, and her home was left desolate – a sad reminder of her folly in building so near the ground.

So it is with people who have no higher ambition than earthly pleasures, wealth or honors. **THEY BUILD TOO LOW!** Their heart’s home is in easy reach of death and the devil — and depend upon it— the destroyer will come, soon or late.

One day, this world – and ALL that is in it – will come to an end when Jesus returns.

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up”
(2 Peter 3:10).

If we have been placing our focus and our hope in the things of this world, **WE TOO** will discover **TOO LATE** that we have **“BUILT TOO LOW.”**

Author Unknown

What must I do to be saved?

Humans give many answers, but one of the most common is that the sinner must believe in Jesus as the Savior, and he must pray “The Sinner’s Prayer”:

“Heavenly Father, I have sinned against you and I am truly sorry. I now want to turn away from my sinful past and turn to you for forgiveness. Please forgive me, and help me avoid sinning again. I believe that your Son, Jesus Christ, died for my sins, that He was raised from the dead, is alive, and hears my prayer. I invite Jesus to become my Savior and the Lord of my life, to rule and reign in my heart from this day forward. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.”

The problem with this answer is that no Bible reference is given — *because there is NOT one! In Bible times, no sinner was ever asked to pray “The Sinner’s Prayer”!* “What must I do to be saved?” is obviously a biblical question, so the *valid* answer must come from Scripture, not from the creeds written by humans.

Yes, we must believe in Jesus, that He died for our sins, and that we must turn to Him if we want to be saved. But when the penitent Saul (later to be known as the apostle Paul) was praying three days and nights for forgiveness, a preacher of the Gospel came to him and told him what he — as a penitent believer — was required to do to have his sins forgiven:

“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

The crowd gathered on the Day of Pentecost, hearing that first Gospel sermon by the apostles, were told, **“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...”** (Acts 2:38). Study also: Romans 6:3,4; John 3:3,5; Acts 8:12; 36-38; 9:18; 16:30-33. Galatians 3:26,27 says clearly that we are baptized INTO CHRIST. Can there be salvation BEFORE one is IN CHRIST? Can a sinner be saved OUTSIDE of Christ????

Does the Church of Christ Exist Today?

Jesus said, "... I will build My church, and the gates of *hades* will not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). The promise concerning the Lord's return is that "... the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17).

So Christ's church will exist until He returns, as a family of physical people. It can be identified. The lost can be baptized into it, so that they become a part of the body of Christ. They will then be able to worship weekly with the other family members — Christians — to fellowship with them, to work together, to teach others how to be born into that family. These are identification marks:

Origin	Requirements for Entrance	Worship	Work
<u>Founder:</u> Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:18) <u>Time:</u> AD 33, Pentecost <u>Place:</u> Jerusalem (Acts 2) <u>Name:</u> Church of Christ	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Hear the Gospel (Romans 10:14)◆ Believe (Mark 16:16)◆ Repent of sins (Luke 13:3)◆ Confess Christ (Acts 8:37)◆ Baptized into Christ (Romans 6:3,4)	<u>Sing (only)</u> (Ephesians 5:19) <u>Pray</u> (1 Thessalonians 5:17) <u>Study God's Word</u> (1 Timothy 4:16) <u>The Supper</u> (1 Corinthians 11; Acts 20:7) <u>Give</u> (1 Corinthians 16:2)	<u>Live Godly Lives</u> (1 Cor. 11:1; Jn. 14:15) <u>Preach the Gospel</u> (Matthew 28:18-20) <u>Teach the church</u> (2 Timothy 4:2) <u>Compassion toward the Hurting, Widows and Orphans</u> (Galatians 6:10; 2:10; James 1:27)

Does the church of which you are a member match these identification marks?

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STAFF:

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Associate Editors: Jerry Bates
Louis Rushmore
Layout Editors: Betty Burton Choate
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Typesetting: Gay Nichols
Computer Consultant: Bradley S. Choate

SPANISH EDITION:

Managing Editor: Rafael Barrantes

TELUGU EDITION:

Managing Editors, Translators:
Joshua Gootam

TAMIL EDITION:

Managing Editor, Translator: P.R. Swamy
and S. Rajanayagam

BRILLE EDITION:

Managing Editor (India), Philemon Raja

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STAFF WRITERS:

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THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST SALUTE YOU
(ROMANS 16:16).



Some Observations Regarding the Selection of Elders

Byron Nichols

During his tenure as President of the United States, Harry S. Truman boldly displayed on his desk in the Oval Office a plaque which read, “The buck stops here”. He wasn’t being boastful, but rather was soberly acknowledging the fact that as the head of his nation, he alone was responsible for making decisions and

accepting accountability that no one else could.

The church was designed by the Lord in a similar way in that those men who are the elders in any given congregation have responsibility and accountability not given to any other men, regardless of how godly these others might be. What a serious thing it is to be the shepherds of Christ’s flock. In Hebrews 13:17, we learn that they have been commissioned to “*watch for your souls, as those who must give account*”. Every elder (shepherd) would do well to have these grave words etched permanently into his mind so that he recalls and renews his commitment frequently, both for the sake of those sheep in his congregation and for his own sake.

I continue to be convinced that no congregation will ever engage in anything as vital to its spiritual welfare as when they choose men to serve as their shepherds or elders. It is much easier to select an elder than to remove one who has shown that he is not qualified or is not meeting his responsibilities.

The Scriptures declare that elders are to be men of outstanding character, men of wisdom, men who are knowledgeable regarding the Bible, men of courage and conviction, and men who truly love the souls of their flock, as well as the souls of the lost. Several passages having to do with elders include 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5ff, 1 Peter 5:1-4, Acts 20:28-38, Hebrews 13:7,17, and James 5:13-15.

Over the years, it has become more and more common for congregations to settle for the idea of choosing men to serve as elders, not because they are qualified, but because “they are the best that we have to choose from”. Brethren, there is no biblical authority for such action. Being the best available doesn’t come from the Bible. If that can be the criteria for selection, that means that what the Holy Spirit led Paul, Peter, and others to write in terms of qualifications was a waste of His and their time.

Another development that has evolved over the past several years is for the existing elders to insist that anyone who has an objection to an elder candidate being added to the eldership not bring the objection to them, but go to that brother and discuss directly with him the reason(s) for the objection. It is very true that we have not been given any set of “required procedures” for selecting elders, so we must be cautious about binding our own preferred procedures on others. Nonetheless, this particular practice is problematic for several reasons. (1) It would appear that this action is based on what Jesus said in Matthew 18:15-17 when He talked about going to your brother who has sinned against you. It is without justification to apply Jesus’ teaching in this text to a brother who feels he has a biblical reason for objecting to the qualifications of a brother becoming an elder. The Lord was dealing with a situation where one brother **sins** against another brother, and Jesus says that the one offended is to go to the one who did the offending and discuss the matter with him privately. It is important to note that just because “brother A” doesn’t believe that “brother B” is biblically qualified to serve as an elder does not at all mean that he feels that “brother B” has **sinned** against him. (2) To misapply the Lord’s teaching in Matthew 18 in this manner serves to discourage sincere Christians from participating in the elder selection process. Very few are willing to go to “brother B” and risk alienating him by telling him that they conscientiously believe that he does not meet the biblical qualifications of an elder. Is it fair or wise for the existing elders to subject brethren to this procedure, particularly when it has no biblical basis? (3) Whether intended or not, such a practice serves to save the existing elders from having to justify their choice to brethren who feel they have scriptural reasons for questioning the qualifications of a brother. (4) This practice also misleads unqualified candidates to thinking that everyone apparently approves of their selection by the elders. (5) With this practice basically preventing the objection process, it allows the current elders to contend that no one voiced any disagreement.

We must remember that regardless of whatever imperfections may exist in the church, the **plan** for the church was perfect — it is only the **men and women** who make up the church who are imperfect. †



These words are found in Hebrews 6:10 where it is stated, “*For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name...*” These words should encourage each of us, because they reassure us that our labor is not in vain. Some may piously declare that we should not serve God merely for hope of gain, which is true; nevertheless, we all hope and believe that we will eventually be rewarded for our service. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:19, “*If in this life only, we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable*”.

God Is Not Unjust

Jerry Bates

Let us think about the statement in Hebrews 6:10 for a few minutes. “*God is not unjust.*” This means that God does not change His mind or regret His decisions. When God makes a promise, He will keep it. This assures us that God is not like man. We often change our minds. We cannot predict the future, therefore, we have to adapt to new situations. Sometimes we are hindered by forces more powerful than we from keeping our promises, and at other times, we may do it out of greed. We think we can get a better deal. Regardless of the reasons, man is often not very reliable. That does not describe God, though. God does not have to adapt to new situations because He knows and controls the future. Nothing can hinder God from accomplishing His purposes, and He is certainly never controlled by greed. God is reliable, and He wants us

to know and believe that. In order to assure us that we can trust Him, the writer reminds us that God made a promise to Abraham and confirmed it by an oath (Hebrews 6:13-18). Thus, we never have to wonder if there is a reward waiting for us when this life is over. God has guaranteed us that there is, and it is impossible for God to lie (Hebrews 6:18).

Next, we find that “*God is not unjust to forget*”. Man often forgets. Our minds are weak and fallible. Sometimes, we intentionally forget because we do not want to do something, so we just conveniently proclaim that we forgot. The idea of forgetting carries the connotation of simply neglecting to do something. Frequently, we have the best of intentions, but we neglect to carry them out. In Hebrews 5:12, it is stated that the readers of this book had neglected to grow spiritually as they should have. In Hebrews 2:3, we are warned against neglecting our salvation. Later in this book, the writer encourages Christians never to neglect to show hospitality (Hebrews 13:2). Yes, we often neglect things, but God does not. He will never neglect or forget His promises. Thus, we never have to worry about coming to the judgment seat, and hearing God say, “Sorry!”

When God makes a promise, He will keep it.

On the other hand, God does forget some things. He forgets our past sins (Isaiah 43:25). The writer of Hebrews stated in 8:12, “*For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more*”. Again, this is frequently in contrast to what man does. We tend to forget the good and remember the evil. Hence, if you wonder how God can ever reward you because you have done so much wrong, then you do not have to be unsure any longer. God does not remember the sins of His people (when they repent of them, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9).

Finally, we read that “*...God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love*” (Hebrews 6:10). Love is the motivation for doing these deeds of service, and we do them with no hope of recompense. It is not a labor of love, if we do it hoping to receive something in return. Our labor proves our love. Knowing that God will not forget our labor can be a great source of comfort and encouragement to us, because it assures us that God will not overlook our deeds. We must never think, “No one cares about what I do”. God does!

We have a trustworthy and reliable God. We serve a just, loving God who shows His appreciation for faithful service. Therefore, let us rely on His many promises and always endeavor to serve Him and our fellow man. Be assured, our labor will not be in vain. †



Do You Know How to Tie a Full Windsor Knot?

Louis Rushmore

Now decades ago, I learned to tie a tie with a full Windsor knot. That is a good thing since as a preacher in the USA, I wear a tie every time I preach or teach in a formal setting. However, to this day, I may have to tie a tie more than once to get the right length in relationship to my belt. Why is that?

The several ties in my possession are made of different kinds of cloth, are of different

widths, are of different thicknesses, and are of different lengths. These variables make tying a tie properly differ from one tie to another tie, though I tie each of them with a full Windsor knot. So, what do I do to tie each tie properly?

A number of aspects of tying my ties contribute to successfully tying them, despite the variables. First, experience — having tied my various ties previously — helps me more easily tie my ties successfully. Yet, experience alone does not guarantee that each first attempt to tie a tie will be successful. Often, I tie my tie successfully through trial and error. That means when the first or second attempts prove unsatisfactory, each subsequent attempt involves making an adjustment from the previous failed attempt. Usually, after no more than three attempts, I can successfully tie a double or full Windsor knot.

Successes in the Lord's work bear some resemblance to the procedures for successfully tying a tie. Variables abound in people and circumstances, though the Gospel is not a variable (Jude 3; 2 Peter 1:3). Therefore, experience is an invaluable contribution to successes in the work of the Lord (Hebrews 5:14). Yet, because of the variables, a certain amount of trial and error — day by day — often contributes to successes in the work of the Lord (2 Timothy 4:7,8).

Whether one can tie a double Windsor knot when donning a tie — or whether he wears a tie at all, in the grand scheme of things, is inconsequential. What really matters, though, is that Christians apply themselves in Christian service (1 Corinthians 15:58). †

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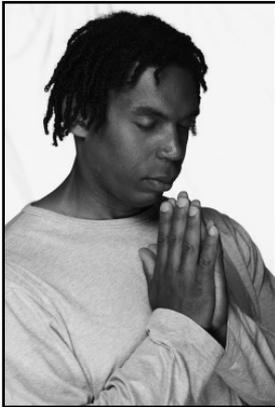
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THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

Dalton Key

We often rehearse what God has done for us in centuries now past, and such is proper. God created the world, made man, provided our salvation through Christ, and established the church. We are thankful for these mighty works of the past. Yet, we must not ignore the fact that God is still very much active in human affairs. *“The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will”* (Daniel 4:17).

Of course, there are extremes to avoid. Pitfalls of extremism are a danger in most all areas of biblical study, and this area is no exception. Some defend the extreme notion that God cannot take an active part in human affairs without working miraculously or eliminating our freedom of choice. Others teeter at the opposite extreme, flatly denying that God has any current role in the matters of men. We believe the Bible teaches both of these extremes to be false and equally dangerous.



“Nevertheless what saith the Scriptures?” (Galatians 4:30). *“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea”* (Psalm 46:1,2). *“I will fear no evil; for thou art with me”* (Psalm 23:4). *“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness”* (Isaiah 41:10). *“Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows”* (Matthew 10:29,31).

“...and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:30). *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose”* (Romans 8:28). *“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me”* (Hebrews 13:5,6).

GOD

We may never come to fully understand the **how** of these promises, but we may be assured of their veracity, “*For he is faithful that promised*” (Hebrews 10:23). Our confidence and reliance upon God’s providence is manifested each time we earnestly pray, “*Give us this day our daily bread. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*” (Matthew 6:11,13). Such entreaties would be shallow pretense at best were it not for our confidence in divine providence. “*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*” only if God answers such prayers providentially (James 5:16). Who will deny it? †

Dalton Key is the Editor of *Old Paths* and preaches for the 10th and Rockford congregation in Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA.

Providence

Kevin Rhodes

Providence is one of the hardest concepts to understand in the Bible, yet it is taught, without any doubt. When Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery, they did not have anything in mind other than ridding themselves of a “nuisance” and making a little extra money. Though Joseph handled the situation very well, working in Potiphar’s house, rising to importance in prison, and eventually coming to be second in the kingdom, he did not – at the moment his brothers sold him – have a grand plan for saving his brothers from a future famine.

However, after all of these things had passed and Joseph could look back on this cumulation of events, he told his brothers, “*Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life*” (Genesis 45:5). Joseph did not mean to excuse the wrong that his brothers committed, but he did see the bigger picture – that events had turned out well in the long run, despite what had appeared to be a situation from which nothing good could come.

Providence does not interfere with nature. It is God using natural means to accomplish His will. Though we can never know for sure when something is providential, even in hindsight, we should always look back upon events to see the good that came from them instead of dwelling on the bad. †

A Christ-Centered Religion

Kerry Holton

Jesus Christ is at the center of our religion. He is the focal point. So He must remain. Notice how central He was in the early church:

He was the message. When Christians scattered after Stephen's martyrdom, they went to Antioch, "*preaching the Lord Jesus*" (Acts 11:20). Paul preached Christ crucified (1 Corinthians 1:23). They preached the good news of His death, burial, and resurrection. Likewise, Jesus must remain the content of our preaching; the main point of our Gospel.

He was the One to Whom people converted. In Antioch, those who heard about the Lord Jesus believed and "*turned to the Lord*" (Acts 11:21). Paul remembered how the Thessalonians had turned to God (1 Thessalonians 1:9). Sometimes, one will ask another, "When did you become a member of the church?" True, we become part of the Lord's body, the church, when we become Christians (Acts 2:47). However, it might be better to ask, "When did you turn to the Lord?" When a person be-

comes a Christian, he is establishing a relationship with Jesus. He is the One to Whom we turn.

He was the Person to Whom Christians gave their allegiance. Barnabas encouraged new Christians in Antioch to remain true to the Lord (Acts 11:23). A Christian's loyalty is pledged to Christ. He is the flag around which we rally. We are only loyal to sound doctrine and to God's people because we are loyal to Christ. If we are unfaithful to the truth or to the church, we are unfaithful to Christ.

He was the Person to Whom sinners were brought. Luke tells us that many residents of Antioch were brought to the Lord (Acts 11:24). "*Come to me,*" Jesus said.

We must keep the Lord Jesus Christ at the center of our message and our religion. If a man were to take Christ out of Christianity, what would remain? A religion without Christ at the center is no religion at all. †

Kerry Holton is now working for the Lord in Chicago, Illinois, USA.

GOD

ARE YOU LISTENING TO THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Kevin L. Moore

Psalm 95, written about ten centuries before Christ by the prophet David, is an appeal to worship Jehovah with joy and thanksgiving and to humbly submit to His revealed will. In view of the disobedient Israelites of the past, readers are admonished: *“Today, if you will hear His voice: Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion.... For forty years I was grieved with that generation, And said, ‘It is a people who go astray in their hearts, And they do not know My ways.’ So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest’”* (verses 7-11, NKJV).



Why were these ancient Israelites ignorant of the ways of Jehovah? It was not because the divine will had been withheld from them or was insufficiently communicated. It was not because the heavenly message was too complicated to understand. Rather, they did not know God’s ways because they refused to listen with open, receptive hearts, and therefore they carelessly disregarded the sacred Word of the Lord.

God is still speaking to those who are willing to listen. Hebrews 3:7,8 declares, *“Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says [present tense]: ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion...’”* Note that Psalm 95 is being quoted, but instead of the

GOD

words being attributed to David (as in Hebrews 4:7), here the Holy Spirit is credited. This passage affirms not only the divine inspiration of Scripture, but also the current and continual relevance of Scripture. The Holy Spirit is saying, “Today...”

The expression “today” in this passage obviously has reference to the day on which David, through inspiration, penned these words, but it is

The Lord genuinely desires what is best for you and me. He wants to save us and to bless us, and for us to enjoy the heavenly rest that has been prepared for all who come to Him on His terms. But He cannot do anything for those who, through stubbornness or neglect, are unwilling to listen and obey.

also applicable to the day the writer of Hebrews quoted this psalm, and the day his readers first heard these words, and this very day that you and I are presently experiencing. In other words, each day that we live on this earth is not yesterday or tomorrow – it is always “today”.

The Lord genuinely desires what is best for you and me. He wants to save us and to bless us, and for us to enjoy the heavenly rest that has been prepared for all who come to Him on His terms. But He cannot do anything for those who, through stubbornness or neglect, are unwilling to listen and obey. *“Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end”* (Hebrews 3:12-14).

Are we listening?



Kevin L. Moore teaches Bible and Missions at Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee, USA.

**ARE YOU
LISTENING?**

More On Fossils

Basil Overton

Even Darwin Knew

Even Charles Darwin knew that the fossil record did not support his doctrine. He said, “In the sixth chapter I enumerated the chief objections which might be justly urged against the views maintained in this volume ... One, namely, the distinctness of specific forms and their not being blended together, innumerable, transitional links, is a very obvious difficulty.” (Charles Darwin, *Origin of Species*, A.L. Burt Company, pages 312-313.)

In the foregoing, Darwin had reference to the “distinctness of specific forms” in the fossil record. In this same book, Darwin devoted Chapter Twelve to the fact of the lack of evidence in the fossil record to support his evolutionary doctrine.

Darwin also recognized that the presence of fossils of animals and plants that were fully developed in the “oldest” fossil bearing rocks was a serious problem for his views. He said, “There is another and allied difficulty which is more serious. I allude to the manner in which species belonging to several of the main divisions of the animal kingdom suddenly appear in the lowest [same as the oldest to evolutionists, B.O.] known fossiliferous rocks. To the question why we do not find rich fossiliferous deposits belonging to those assumed earliest periods prior to the Cambrian system, I can give no satisfactory answer.” (Ibid., 38-39.)

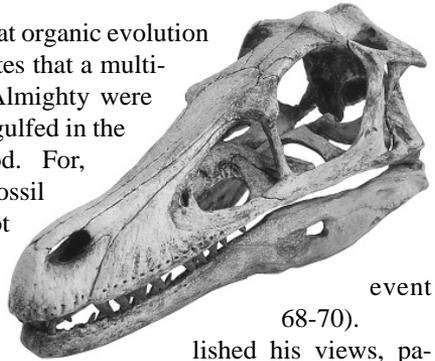
Darwin thus admitted that there were no fossils of any ancestors or predecessors of those forms that appear abundantly in the Cambrian rock, which according to evolutionists, is the “oldest” rock containing fossils. The big question for evolutionists is, therefore: From whence came the life forms represented in such great abundance in the Cambrian or “oldest” fossil bearing rock? If their doctrine is true, these forms had to gradually develop over a very long period of time. Where is the record of such a process of such gradual

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development? The record certainly has not been found in the rocks!

To this scribe, it is reasonable to believe that the greater part of the fossil record was made by the catastrophic action of the flooding, shifting, changing earth during the great flood of Noah's time, and during a long readjustment period following the deluge. Scholars say that the original language of Genesis 7:11 indicates that such action occurred during the flood. The flood waters did not all come from falling rain, but "the fountains of the great deep were broken up" and evidently the waters from the great deep helped to turn the earth into a shoreless sea.

Instead of containing evidence that organic evolution has occurred, the fossil record indicates that a multiplicity of life forms made by God Almighty were living together and were suddenly engulfed in the catastrophic action of that great flood. For, if we do not relate the origin of the fossil record to that great flood, we cannot relate it to any event, because there is no record of any other historical to which we can relate it (pages



When Charles Darwin published his views, paleontology (the study of fossils) was in the beginning stages. He hoped that new fossil evidence would be discovered that would support his evolutionary views. He hoped that all around the world, fossil evidence would be unearthed and the "missing links" would be discovered to support his assumptions that evolution had occurred. His hope was vain, because it has been about 140 years since he expressed his hope, and thousands of tons of fossils have been found by digging all around the world, and now evolutionists use even fewer fossils to try to support Darwin's views than they did soon after he published his views. Dr. David Raup says this. He is the curator of the world famous Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago. In that museum are nearly one fourth of all the fossils that have been found in all the world. This information is in an article by him in the January 1972 issue of the *Field Museum Bulletin*.

The Fossils Say, No!

Several years ago, I had the blessing and privilege of hearing Dr. Duane T.

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Gish lecture in Huntsville, AL. It was a great pleasure for me to talk with him and to give him one of my books.

Dr. Gish's Ph.D. is in Biochemistry from the University of California in Berkley. He spent 18 years in biochemical and biomedical research at Cornell University Medical College, the Virus Laboratory of Berkley University of California and the Upjohn Company in Kalamazoo, MI. He has written many books and articles. He is a popular lecturer on the creation versus evolution issue. He has had many debates with evolutionists on campuses of many prestigious colleges and universities. I admire and appreciate him for all the great work he has done to refute the evolutionary hypothesis and to defend the doctrine of creation by Almighty God.

Evolutionists attempt to explain the absence of "transitional links" in the fossil record by saying there are imperfections in the record. Dr. Gish says the following on this matter.

It seems clear then, that after 150 years of intense searching, a large number of obvious transitional forms would have been discovered if the predictions of evolution theory are valid. We have, for example, discovered literally billions of fossils of ancient invertebrates, and many fossils of ancient fishes. The transition of invertebrate into vertebrate is believed to have required many millions of years. Populations are supposed to constitute the units of evolution and, of course, only successful populations survive. It seems obvious, then, that if we find fossils of the invertebrates which were supposed to have been ancestral to fishes, and if we find fossils of the fishes, we surely ought to find the fossils of the transitional forms. If fish evolved into amphibia, as evolutionists believe, then we would predict that we would find transitional forms showing the gradual transition of fins into feet and legs. Of course, many other alterations in the anatomy and physiology of fishes would have to occur to change an animal adapted to living its entire life span in water to one which spends most of its life outside of water. The fin to feet transition would be an easily traceable transition, however. If reptiles



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gave rise to birds, then we would expect to find transitional forms in the fossil record showing the gradual transition of the forelimbs of the ancestral reptile into the wings of a bird, and the gradual transition of some structure of the reptile into the feathers of a bird. These again are obvious transitions that could be easily traced in the fossil record. Of course, many other changes would have been taking place at the same time, such as the conversion of the hind feet of the reptile into the perching feet of the bird, reptilian skull into birdlike skull, etc. (*Evolution*, “The Fossils Say No”, by Dr. Duane Gish, pages 32-33)

R.B. Goldschmidt is one of the most prominent evolutionists even though he does not agree with the doctrine that all evolutionary changes took place very slowly by many thousands of slight changes. Instead, he proposed that major changes were sudden. He called this “the hopeful monster mechanism.” Dr. Gish commented on this as follows.

He proposed, for instance, that at one time a reptile laid an egg and a bird was hatched from the egg! All major gaps in the fossil record were accounted for, according to Goldschmidt, by similar events – something laid an egg, and something else got born! Neo-Darwinists prefer to believe that Goldschmidt is the one who laid the egg, maintaining that there is not a shred of evidence to support his “hopeful monster” mechanism. Goldschmidt insists just as strongly that there is no evidence for the postulated neo-Darwinian mechanism (major transformations by the accumulation of micro mutations). Creationists agree with both the neo-Darwinists and Goldschmidt – there is no evidence for either type of evolution! Goldschmidt’s publications do offer cogent arguments against the neo-Darwinian view of evolution, from both the field of genetics and the field of paleontology. (Ibid., page 119.)

Evolutionists leave the impression that surely no one would deny that evolution is a scientific fact if he looks at the fossil record. This is a specious, psychological trick that deceives multitudes who “assume that fossils and evolution go hand in hand. Some people even seem to think that ‘believing’ in fossils is almost the same as ‘believing’ in evolution” (*What is Creation Science?* by Dr. Henry Morris and Dr. Gary Parker, page 96). †

Basil Overton, the former Editor of the *World Evangelist*, is now retired. He lives in Florence, Alabama, USA.

Reconsider Matthew 24

With Mark 13 and Luke 21

Betty Burton Choate

It was early in the week, probably Tuesday, before the crucifixion of Christ. The Lord walked with His disciples from the Temple area, and as He left that majestic building He turned and said, “*Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down*” (Matthew 24:2).

The disciples must have been both stunned and puzzled by His statement. The Temple was the site of the holy place of God. It was here in this city of Jerusalem that David the king had reigned, and would not the Christ re-establish that throne and reign here also? But if the city of God and the Temple were to be destroyed, would that not also herald the destruction of the whole world? How could all of these things fit together?

Surely, Christ’s prophecy caused alarm and confusion in the hearts of His hearers, so they came to Him with three questions:

(1) When will these things be?

(2) What will be the sign of your coming?

(3) What will be the sign of the end of the age?

The three natural breaks in Matthew 24 are 4-28, 29-35, and 36-44. The prophetic facts given in the first section were so graphically fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 that surely no Bible student would apply those verses to any other event.

Regarding their enquiry about the signs that would herald the coming of the end of the age, Jesus said, “*Of that day and hour no one knows.*” He gave no signs that could be identified as warnings. His answer suggests that even on up to the end, things will appear to be normal, with people going about their work and their relationships, totally unaware that the end is upon them — except that evil will surely be dominant, as it was in the days of Noah and in every other period or place where God has been left no choice but to destroy.

Both the first portion and the last portion of Jesus’ answer are looked upon as being prophetic but with largely literal language used and with literal fulfillment to be expected. The middle portion, verses 29-35 (Mark 13:24-31; Luke 21:25-33), is the part that is debated, misunderstood, and misapplied. It is the portion that is explained as having highly figurative language, with symbolic fulfillment. I would like to offer an examination of these verses, in conjunc-

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tion with related Scriptures, believing that the harmony among all of these passages is a strong indication that this understanding may be closer to what Jesus had in mind than the explanations that are usually offered.

Ordinarily, one of two applications is made of the verses.

*(1) “*Immediately after the tribulation of those days...*” is thought to be referring to the destruction of Jerusalem, so verses 29-35 are said to be speaking of the full blossoming of the kingdom, bringing the fulfillment within “*that generation*”, as verse 34 requires.

*(2) The Son of Man “*coming in the clouds*”, and “*the angels gathering the elect*” bring to mind the language used in other places to describe the end of the world. Some, therefore, apply these verses to that event. “*Immediately after the tribulation...*” and “*this generation shall not pass...*” are explained as figurative: “*One day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years is as one day*”; “generation can also mean an age, making the meaning of verse 34: ‘This Christian age will not end until these things are fulfilled.’”

There are sound and logical objections to these interpretations:

*(1) If the destruction of Jerusalem was the “tribulation” of verse 29, then **Christ came** in some way immediately after that; **redemption** became a reality immediately after that; **the kingdom** was at hand immediately after that (Luke 21:28-31). Some say so, explaining that even though redemption and the kingdom had actually been in the world since Pentecost, the temple and the physical vestiges of the law of Moses had to be removed before the kingdom could stand without competition in the world. So this explanation makes the language concerning the destruction of Jerusalem absolutely literal in its timing and fulfillment, while interpreting the statements about the kingdom and its beginning as only figurative.

*(2) On the other hand, if these verses are applied to the end of the world, other objections must be raised:

Verse 36 says plainly that no signs would be given regarding “*that day*” because no one except God knows when the second coming of the Son of Man will occur. To take verses, which include numerous signs, and to apply them to the end of the world is to force a contradiction between these Scriptures. Also, verses 28 and 33 of Luke say that the signs would show that **redemption** and **the kingdom** were “*near*” and “*at hand*”. Surely, no Christian would teach the theory of Christ establishing His kingdom at His second coming and then beginning His reign at that time. Surely, no Christian would teach that “*redemption*” would be “*near*” at His second coming, because the Scriptures

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clearly show that, “...now is the accepted time; ... now is the day of salvation,” and “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, **to execute judgment on all...**” (Jude 14,15). He will not be coming to offer redemption to those who have not already accepted it.

Now, in order to better understand verses 29-35, let us do two things: Let us remember that one of the rules for understanding Scripture is that a literal meaning is to be accepted unless it is obvious beyond question that figurative language has been used; and let us put ourselves back in that time frame. What has been happening? What is in the process of happening?

These verses would seem to be answering the disciples’ question, “*What will be the sign of your coming?*” We should ask ourselves, **what coming were they expecting?** What was the one thing that Christ had continually promised before the passing of that generation?

“Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom” (Matthew 16:28).

“Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power” (Mark 9:1).

The whole of John the Baptist’s message had pointed to the imminent coming of the kingdom (Matthew 3:2). Christ’s message also was, “...*the kingdom is near at hand*” (Mark 1:15).

The focal point of the Old Testament had been the triumphant reigning of the new King on the throne of Israel. The Jewish nation lived in expectation of the coming of the King who would occupy David’s throne. The disciples believed that Jesus was that promised King, and they looked toward the day when He would march into Jerusalem and proclaim Himself King, throwing off the tyranny of Rome. The triumphant procession into the city that had taken place probably on Sunday, just two days earlier, was vivid in their minds.

But the question stumped them: How could He reign in a city that He declared was to be totally destroyed?

So, the disciples were expecting Christ’s “coming” to be as the King in His kingdom. They did not yet understand that He had been speaking literally when He began teaching them from chapter 16:21 that He would die, so they could not understand that He would ascend to Heaven or that He would have a “coming” at the end of the world, such as we look for.

Jesus spoke to them in the context of their time and of their expectation: of the “coming” that was promised to take place “*in that generation*”: **His coming into His kingdom.** He began His teaching with a reference to a “**tribulation**”.

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Because this “tribulation of those days” has been interpreted as the destruction of Jerusalem, the entire message has been thrown forward in time, and misunderstood. But if we look at the far more important tribulation confronting Christ — His struggle in the garden and His arrest and trial, leading to the crucifixion — a tribulation that had been troubling Him greatly and about which He had been teaching His disciples for more than a year (Matthew 16:18 and forward) — we can better understand what He was saying.

We minimize the importance of this “tribulation”, but let us put ourselves in that scene for a minute. The sinless Son of God was about to “be made sin”, to take the burden of all the sins of all ages. I can think of nothing that would have brought Him more agony of soul than this impending event.

And what sorrow and fear the disciples must have felt, as He continued to tell them of His approaching death! They had totally disrupted their own lives, “gambling” everything on His authenticity as the promised Messiah. They were expecting that He would somehow bring victory out of His warnings of death, and that He must fulfill the prophecies to reign as Israel’s king. When He was actually arrested, when the trial turned into a death sentence, when the cross became a deadly reality, their whole world and all their expectations were thrown upside-down and destroyed. Surely, in their lack of comprehension, this must have been a far more traumatic time for them than was the destruction of Jerusalem (which they had been forewarned to expect) forty years later.

So, if, in effect, Jesus introduced this second answer by returning to references He had long been making concerning a tribulation — the agony of soul that Christ and His followers would experience within the week — what are the following words teaching?

“...*the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven ...*” In Isaiah 13:10 and Ezekiel 32:7, similar words were used figuratively to describe the fall of Babylon and Egypt. Some today would say that Matthew 24:29 speaks figuratively of the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. But I would ask a question: If Jesus’ words had reference to an event forty years down the road — and were only figurative, even then — what must His disciples have thought when they saw all the literal trauma in the elements just three days later when Jesus was crucified? Would it not have confused them, so that they would have struggled to remember the other things Jesus had said would follow the disturbance in the physical heaven and earth?

Another point: It is true that “*the sun being darkened and the moon not giving her light*” had been used in the Old Testament to foretell figuratively

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the fall of world powers, but in *none* of those prophecies was the statement made: “...*the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.*” It seems reasonable to conclude that the “*powers of the heavens*” is representative of the eternal effect on the Godhead and on God Himself in the death of His Son.

What happened after His death? For the moment, let us skip verses 30 and 31 and go on to Jesus’ conclusion. He said that just as the budding of the fig tree foretold the coming of summer, when the disciples saw these “*signs*” they would “*know that it is near, even at the doors.*” What? They had asked, “*What will be the sign of Thy coming?*” He had given them signs, and He concluded with the assurance that, “*This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.*” The promise He had made earlier in Matthew 16:28 and Mark 9:1, concerning His coming in His kingdom, must have rung as an echo in their ears.

But **what** was near? Luke 21:28 says “*it*” had reference to “... *your redemption draweth nigh*”. Luke 21:31 identifies “*it*” even further: “... *when these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.*”

The disciples were listening. They took Jesus’ words literally, and so after all the turmoil in the elements at His death, they asked about the kingdom in Acts 1:6. It seems that they thought they had seen the budding of the fig tree, so they were on tiptoes, looking for the kingdom!

With the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles in Acts 2, when they began to preach, the prophecy of Joel was used to explain what was happening. Joel had said that the day would come when men would be able to call on the name of the Lord and be saved. He called it a great and notable day. Peter said, “*This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.*”

So the **great** day, the **notable** day, the day for which **all of God’s efforts from the beginning of time had been made**, had come: the day when **salvation could be offered** to all men, in the kingdom!

But Joel had said that there would be signs before that day: “*I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood and fire, and vapour of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood...*” (verses 19,20).

Jesus had pointed to the signs and had pointed on past them to mark the day of the coming of the kingdom. Peter marked the day of the coming of the kingdom by pointing back to the signs, the unusual and disturbing events that the people who had gathered on that day of Pentecost had witnessed with their own eyes. Is it any wonder that the words brought immediate conviction?

Do we puzzle over the meaning of verses 30 and 31? If so, perhaps it is

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because we are so blinded by our own physical world that we forget that when Christ came into His kingdom, it was “*in heaven and in earth*” Acts 1:19 says “... *while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight.*” Daniel 7:13,14 takes up the scene from there: “... *behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.*” To assume the position of authority over all that is in the spirit world — the angelic host and the Hadean world — would have been no small thing, for that world has a far greater population than the physical world, during any given time period.

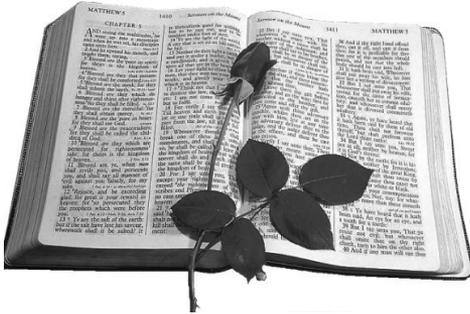
As in Daniel 7, Matthew 24:30 talks of the Son of Man coming in the clouds with power and great glory. Following that description, verse 31 says that He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet to gather His elect from the four winds and from one end of heaven to the other. Isn't it odd, if this verse is speaking of His second coming, that nothing is said about gathering His elect from the earth? Is it not probable, rather, that these words are a description of His assumption of authority when He became King over His subjects in heaven as well as on the earth?

Conclusion: Jesus stood on the Mount of Olives in the very shadow of the cross, facing the “*tribulation*” of the horrors of crucifixion, and the even greater horror of being made sin for us and suffering all the consequences of such a commitment — undoubtedly, the greatest “tribulation” of all time. But He knew, also, that within a few hours the work of the ages would be accomplished, that salvation would be assured, that His kingdom would become a reality, and that He Himself would come on the clouds of Heaven as the triumphant Lord of lords. Can we really think that He would have talked at length about the destruction of a city that had been symbolic of an interim make-do system (Galatians 3:19), and then that He would have concluded with comments about the eventual destruction of the world, but that He would have remained totally silent about the highest pinnacle of history? Surely He did not fail to give His disciples those last important signs concerning His promised coming in His kingdom. †

Betty Burton Choate is the widow of J.C. Choate, founder and Editor of *The Voice of Truth International*.

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We Believe the Bible Is the Inspired Word of God



Ronald D. Bryant

“God’s Word written” is a good and appropriate definition for the Bible. The “Scriptures inspired of God” are God’s Word written. It is one thing to hold that God has acted, revealing Himself in deeds for our salvation. It is yet another to believe that God has spoken, and that holy men of God spoke as

they were moved by the Holy Spirit, and that they did write the works and words of God (cf. 2 Peter 1:20-21; Ephesians 3:1-5). If God had not spoken, there would be no sure Word, and therefore, no sure knowing of His action.

To define the Scriptures as “God’s Word written” is to set forth a basic view of the book called the Bible. God inspired men to record faithfully His revelation. When men (the prophets and the apostles) spoke by inspiration, they spoke the very words that God wanted them to speak. When they wrote by inspiration, they wrote the very words that God wanted written. The Bible is the written words of God, penned by human agents, directed by God. It is God’s Word written through human hands and in the words of men. It is the only authoritative message to man from God, being God’s own account of Christ through the eyewitnesses of His deeds. The Bible alone contains God’s interpretation of His purposes and His instructions for man’s life and duty. Apart from the Bible, there is no statement of God’s purposes, nor are there instructions to obey.

The Old Testament is large and vital, detailing God’s creative purpose and the outworking of His will to bring to the world a Savior. The New Testament looms larger than any message mere mortals could have penned, revealing the fulfillment of the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament. The New Testament is larger than its Jewish background, or any Gentile influence. It is

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larger than the wisdom of all the people that have lived. It derives its authority, not from good men, nor from the noble saints of the first century, but from the authority of God. It possesses authority that they did recognize and did respect, but it does not derive its authority from them.

If, as some suggest, Scripture is largely only a collection of human ideas and philosophy, reflecting the beliefs and actions of the earliest believers, but reflecting only dimly the thoughts of God, then a fairly casual attitude toward it would be acceptable. But, if in handling the Scriptures we are handling the very words of the living God, *‘Words not taught by human wisdom, but taught by the Spirit’* (1 Corinthians 2:13), then nothing should turn us away from the most careful and prayerful consideration and application of it to our lives, and from teaching it to others (cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:13).

The Word of God, the Gospel of Christ, is the “saving message”. The New Testament is a book of salvation. It was given to lift us up out of sin, and it is God’s power in our lives. It is deserving of our trust and our loyalty. If we speak, it is to be in harmony with the Scriptures. It is to be handled aright, taught faithfully, and lived consistently. We are to endeavor to live under its authority and power.

God is speaking to us through what He has said. The Living God has given us the living Word. The Scriptures are far more than a collection of ancient documents in which the words of God are preserved. It is not a relic of the past, but a reality of the present. It is a living message for a people that have been made alive through its power. It is designed for real life application, and for our eternal benefit.

The Scriptures declare of themselves that they are *“alive and powerful”* (Hebrews 4:12). The Scriptures are powerful because they are alive. They are also profitable (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16-17). They are “profitable” because they are living, active, powerful. The admonition contained in Hebrews 3:7, *“Today, if you will hear his voice harden not your hearts,”* is introduced by the phrase *“as the Holy Spirit says,”* implying that the appeal is present tense – the Holy Spirit is presently making the same appeal. When John writes to the seven churches of Asia in the Book of Revelation, it is no empty phrasing when he pleads, *“He who has ears, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”* The will of God given through Christ is not a dead letter. It is living and abiding truth. It is the truth in which we are to abide (John 15:1-8). It IS the Word of God. †

Ronald D. Bryant preaches for the Central congregation in Gadsden, Alabama, USA.

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You Can Rely Upon the Bible!

Flavil Nichols

You can rely upon the Bible! It is indeed reliable! Just as the writings of Shakespeare can be reproduced by comparing the many and varied copies of that author, so by comparing the manuscripts and translations of the Holy Scriptures, we can be sure that we have the WORD OF GOD! In fact, there are far more serious discrepancies among the copies of the Shakespeare than there are among the manuscripts of the Bible.

Compare the span of time and the number of manuscripts of the sacred text with some of the other ancient writings:

1. The ancient classical history of Caesar's Gallic War was composed about 58-50 B.C., with the oldest known manuscript of it dating back to about 850 A.D. A gap of about 900 years exists between its writing and the oldest known copies. Only ten manuscripts of the history are known. Yet, all scholars accept these as reliable history
2. The Roman History of Livy was written about 59 B.C. to A.D. 17, but the oldest known manuscripts of it were made in about A.D. 300. Only 35 copies are known to exist.
3. The history of Thucydides, written 460-400 B.C., is reproduced from only eight manuscripts which were produced thirteen hundred years later (A.D. 900).
4. The History of Herodotus (450-425) B.C.) is translated from only eight known copies, which were made from the "original" (?) one thousand three hundred years later (about A.D. 900).

Now, how does all this "stack up" in comparison with the New Testament? Revelation (the last book of the New Testament) was written about A.D. 89-96. A span of only 250 years brings us to A.D. 350, the date of CODICES. Some 4000 PAPYRUS FRAGMENTS, however, were written from A.D. 130 to A.D. 250. This puts them back within 30 to 150 years after John wrote Revelation. Furthermore, from almost the time John penned the original autograph, early "Church Fathers" began to quote from the New Testament writings A.D. 90 to A. D. 160, a span of 0 to 60 years).

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There are literally thousands of copies of the Sacred Scriptures which enable comparison, and give us assurance of a more accurate text for the New Testament than there is assurance of any text of William Shakespeare's writings! Yes, we have the Word of God! Jesus said, "*My words shall not pass away*" (Matthew 24:35). †

Flavil Nichols is a Gospel preacher and writer living in Huntsville, Alabama, USA.

The Old Testament canon is generally acknowledged to have been assembled by inspired men of God in the latter years of Judaism. "... Ezra ... with Nehemiah, and the great men of the Jewish synagogue formed a canon of Old Testament Scriptures about 420 years before Christ" (*Vine's*).

All indications are that the Law was firmly fixed by the time of Ezra, 400 B.C. We can speak of its being canonical or authoritative by that time. The Prophets (the historical books were known as "the earlier prophets" and the prophetic books were "the later prophets") were probably recognized as canon by about 200 B.C. (*History of the New Testament in Plain Language*)

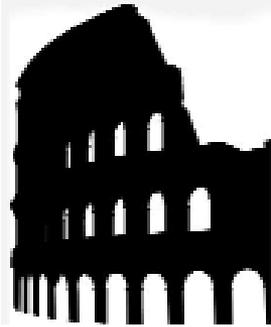
Josephus, the Jewish historian, denotes that the Old Testament was fixed and universally recognized by the Jews as such from about 424 B.C. (Miller, H.S., *General Biblical Introduction*) Further,

The Septuagint Version, begun about 280 B.C. and continued for about 100 years, until about 180 B.C., is a translation of the entire Old Testament into the Greek language. It proves that all the books of the Old Testament existed at that time and were considered canonical. (Miller)

Any doubt regarding the veracity of an Old Testament canon prior to the New Testament era is adequately dismissed by the acceptance of the status quo, regarding that canon, by Jesus the Christ.

The Old Testament canon in the time of our Lord was precisely the same as that which we now possess under that name. He placed the seal of his own authority on this collection of writings, as all equally given by inspiration (Matt. 5:17; 7:12; 22:40; Luke 16:29, 31). [*Easton's*] †

Louis Rushmore, Associate Editor



Romans 8:18-30

Jerry Bates

1. The sufferings of this life cannot really be compared to the glory of the next life. True or False (v. 18)
2. For what is the whole creation waiting to see? (v. 19)
3. What will eventually be delivered from corruption? (v. 21)
4. Who has the “firstfruits of the Spirit? (v. 23)
5. For what are those who have the “firstfruits” eagerly waiting? (v. 23)
6. What is hope? (v. 24)
7. What does hope cause us to do? (v. 25)
8. Who makes intercession for us? (v. 26).
9. How does He make intercession for us? (v. 26)
10. Why do we need Him to make intercession for us (v. 26)
11. What does it mean to intercede for someone?
12. The Spirit makes intercession for us according to the _____ of _____. (v. 27)
13. To whom do all things work together for good? (v. 28)
14. For what are Christians predestined to become? (v. 29)
15. Whom God predestined, He also _____, _____, and _____. (v. 30)
16. To what does “glorified” refer? (v. 30)

(see the back cover for answers)

18 For I consider that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it in hope, 21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. 23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. 24 For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

26 Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. 27 Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because he makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God

28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these he also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Note: This is a difficult section of Scripture. This entire section could be titled “From Suffering to Glory”. The whole creation is personified (given lifelike qualities) and is said to be anxiously awaiting the time when it can escape the bondage of corruption. This is the hope which we as the children of God have, the expectation of receiving the redemption of our body. This hope should cause us to continually live for God, regardless of the obstacles. We have the assurance that God will save His children and will always listen to our prayers.

Perception and Priorities

Dayton Keesee

Decisions determine destiny. Every person reading this article is headed for heaven or for hell. You cannot be neutral! Sorrowful or sublime tomorrows by God's grace and Christ's covenant are the forecast potential of every person. John, by inspiration, succinctly stated these sobering sentiments, entwined with a personal plea: *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust thereof; but he that does the will of God abides forever"* (1 John 2:15-17).

People are daily passing away either through worldly ways to eternal punishment in hell, or by making the Lord's precepts their priorities, moving from this state into that prepared place of eternal delights (Matthew 25:46). Choosing proper priorities should be the preeminent pattern of each person. *Your decisions determine your destiny!* Since the Gospel is God's power unto salvation to everyone (Romans 1:16), then be a Gospel guy or girl! The Master's message must make and motivate each man and woman (Matthew 4:4). Lord Bacon is quoted by Cuyler as having wisely observed:

It is not what men eat but what they digest that makes them strong; not what we gain, but what we save that makes us rich; not what men read, but what they remember that makes them learned; and not what we preach but what we practice that makes us Christians. These are great but common truths, often forgotten by the glutton, the spendthrift, the book-worm and the hypocrite.

May every child and Christian cultivate priority patterns that travel life's pathway by truth, choosing the celestial over the carnal, the divine over the devil! A determination to so do is more pleasant for the present and prepares a person to *enjoy* his or her *eternity* (John 13:17). C.S. Lewis put it this way:

I think earth, if chosen instead of Heaven, will turn out to have been, all along, only a region in Hell; and earth, if put second to Heaven, to have been from the beginning a part of Heaven itself.

Who will you *choose* and what will you *do* today (Joshua 24:15; 2 Corinthians 6:2)?

†

Dayton Keesee is a preacher of the Gospel, living in Midwest City, Oklahoma, USA.

SALVATION

VICTORY OVER DEATH

Wayne Barrier

The fear of death motivates man to devote countless resources to efforts that can possibly lengthen life. Medical procedures, drugs, lifestyle management, personal safety, and physical security are among the many things that come to mind as we think about extending our lives. We love life and do not want to die, but cannot find the way to physical immortality.

The Bible provides the answer to the mystery of everlasting life. Consider the message of 1 Corinthians 15:51-58

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Victory over death is through Jesus Christ. We reach Christ through faith and obedience to His teaching and commandments. We turn from *our* way to *His* way in repentance and baptism (Acts 2:38). The baptized believer is *in* Christ (Romans 6:3,4) and is no longer condemned (Romans 8:1). Those who die "in Christ" will then be ready for resurrection and eternal life. †

Wayne Barrier of Florence, Alabama, USA, is a member of the World Evangelism Team.

SALVATION

Why Was Christ Born?

Barbara Jones

HE WAS BORN TO SAVE SINNERS (Matthew 9:13). Jesus said, “*I did not come to call the righteous, but to save sinners.*” In Hosea 2:19, God says, “*I will betroth you to me forever.*” The Hebrew word is HESE. It is used about 250 times in the Old Testament. It means loyal, steadfast, or faithful love, and it stresses the idea of being together. It connotes God’s faithful love for His people, even when they are unfaithful.

HE WAS BORN TO BRING A SWORD (Matthew 10:34). Christ said, “*I did not come to bring peace but a sword.*” Christ’s mission involved tension, persecution, even death. He said the Gospel would divide families. Some people will believe, some will not. Truth can bring tension in families, and even death. While working in the country of Albania, we were privileged to baptize a young lady into Christ. She said she could not tell her Father about her conversion because he was a Muslim, and if he knew he would kill her. Christ knew situations such as this would occur, but He also said that we must follow God rather than man. The young Albanian woman had to make a life-endangering decision, but thankfully she made the right one.

HE WAS BORN TO BRING REST (Matthew 11:28-30). Christ said, “*Come unto Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*” This great invitation extends to all who will come. It is threefold: come to receive salvation, to learn to be a disciple, and to serve the Lord. This was in direct contrast with what the Scribes taught. Jesus said, “*My yoke is easy and my burden is light.*”

HE WAS BORN TO REDEEM MAN (Ephesians 1:7). Jesus paid the ransom with His blood. He removed the curse of the law (If you sin, you die, Romans 8:1,2). He released man from the bondage of sin into the freedom of grace (1 Peter 1:18). Redemption is always through His blood (Colossians 1:14).

HE WAS BORN TO BE KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS (Revelation 17:14). To be a King you must have a Kingdom. His Kingdom is not earthly, but spiritual. However, His kingdom is physical in the sense that it exists on earth. His kingdom is the church which He purchased with His own blood (Ephesians 1:21,22; Colossians 1:18; Acts 20:28-30). As Christians, we are citizens of His kingdom and serve Him as our King. The word *Lord* actually means owner or ruler. Therefore, we are servants of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

SALVATION

HE WAS BORN TO BRING JOY (Luke 2:10). Luke says, “*Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.*” But only the ones who obey Him will partake of that everlasting joy, of a HOME IN HEAVEN.

HE WAS BORN TO REVEAL GOD TO THE WORLD (John 1:14). He became flesh and dwelt among us. In Jesus, man could see the nature of God, as He does not have a material body, because God is a Spirit.

HE WAS BORN TO BE A PERFECT EXAMPLE (John 13:15). Jesus said, “*I give you an example that you should do as I do.*” He is talking about forgiveness: you are to forgive as I have forgiven you. In washing the disciples’ feet He is giving us a lesson in humility. Ephesians 4:32 teaches, “*Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you.*”

HE WAS BORN TO PREACH THE KINGDOM OF GOD (Luke 4:43). Jesus says He was sent for this purpose (Matthew 4:17). After baptism, Jesus began to preach, saying “*Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.*” He did not let anyone or anything come between Him and His mission.

HE WAS BORN TO CONQUER DEATH (Hebrews 2:14). Jesus came to render powerless the one who had power over death, that is, the devil. He came to be our High Priest and to make propitiation for our sins. Because He was tempted, as we are, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted (1 Corinthians 10:12,13; James 1:13,14).

HE WAS BORN TO BRING ETERNAL LIFE (Matthew 28:6). Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have the promise of eternal life. The angel said, “**HE HAS RISEN.**” Because of His conquest of death, we have the same promise. “*Be faithful until death and I will give you a CROWN OF LIFE*” (Revelation 2:10).

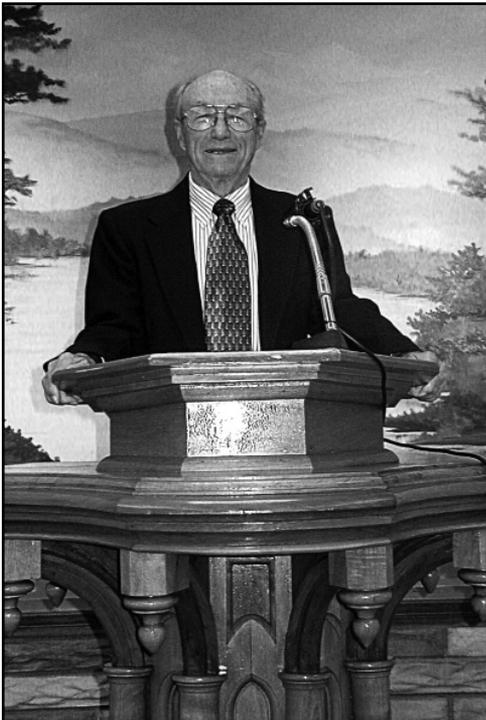
HE WAS BORN TO BE OUR MEDIATOR (1 Timothy 2:5). Paul said, “*There is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.*” A mediator is a go-between. Christ is, therefore, our go-between. He is Mediator between man and God.

HE WAS BORN TO BE OUR JUDGE (John. 6:38; Matthew 25:31,32). Jesus was sent by His Father to do His will. The will of the Father was that Christ would be the Saviour of the world, and also God committed all judgment to His Son. Therefore, for Christians, He is both our Savior and our Judge. †

Barbara Jones has been involved in mission work for the past forty years and currently is working with her husband, James, in the country of Kenya.

Fire in the Pulpit

J.J. Turner



I do not know who coined the phrase, “If you have ice in the pulpit you will have frost in the pews.” I do know, however, that the influence of the pulpit is far reaching. This is evidenced by the emphasis most congregations place on preaching and the pulpit. The preacher can be weak in other areas of ministry, but he had better not be weak in the pulpit. The pulpit usually sets the tone and direction of the congregation. If the pulpit is asleep, the pews will follow in a snooze. If the pulpit is ablaze with zeal, the pews will usually be excited. It is the “follow the leader” routine.

A small church building caught on fire in a small com-

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munity. Everyone turned out to pass the water buckets to put out the fire. In the brigade of bucket passers was a man who surprised everyone by being there. He was the notorious town atheist. When asked why he, an atheist, was helping put out a fire in a church building, he responded with, “This is the first time I have ever seen this church on fire.” The world will take notice when a church is “on fire”, and the church will only be on fire when the pulpit is on fire.

Preaching has never been an easy task, that is, if the Bible injunction to “*preach the word*” is followed (2 Timothy 4:1-4). John the Baptist had his head chopped off for preaching. Jesus was rejected because of His preaching. The apostle Paul wrote specifically about how he was treated as a preacher of the cross (2 Corinthians 11:12-33). Paul gladly suffered the loss of all things in order to preach Christ (see Philippians 3:8). Peter and John were called “*uneducated and untrained*” (Acts 4:13).

Many years ago, I heard Cline Paden say these words to an opening chapel class of preacher students, “If you can do anything else other than preach, then go and do it”. Those words have lingered in my mind and teachings ever since. I later learned that this statement was the favorite of Reuel Lemmons, the late Editor of the *Firm Foundation*, to preacher boys.

The lost world of our day needs torchbearers as never before, men who are on fire with the Gospel and Christ, and who will dare preach it regardless of the cost or circumstances. Fire is a popular and frequently used word in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament.

- God’s presence was associated with fire (Genesis 15:17).
- God spoke to Moses out of a burning bush (Exodus 3:2-4).
- God guided Israel in a pillar of fire (Exodus 13:21).
- Fire was an emblem of God’s glory (Daniel 7:9).
- Fire was a symbol of God’s holiness (Isaiah 6:4).
- Fire was a symbol of God’s protection (2 Kings 6:17).
- Fire was also a symbol of God’s wrath (Deuteronomy 9:3).

No wonder fire is associated with preaching!

Jeremiah: A Preacher on Fire

Fire as a metaphor takes on a very special meaning when applied to God’s spokesmen (preachers). Notice how it related to Jeremiah and his ministry. Jeremiah preached for 40 years and did not have a positive response. He was ridiculed, attacked, abused, and put in jail; yet, for some reason, he kept on preaching. Why? It was the fire. The fire in his soul. First, the fire had been

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given by God: *“Therefore thus says the lord God of hosts: ‘Because you speak this word, behold, I will make My words in your mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them’”* (Jeremiah 5:14).

Second, the fire was in Jeremiah’s bones: *“For when I spoke, I cried out; I shouted, ‘Violence and plunder!’ Because the word of the Lord was made to me a reproach and a derision daily. Then I said, ‘I will not make mention of Him, nor speak anymore in His name.’ But His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not”* (Jeremiah 20:8,9). In the midst of rejection and ridicule, the prophet of God continued to preach because of what was in his bones, FIRE. Fire for God’s cause. This verse always reminds me of the quote of an old preacher who said, “Dear God, please anoint me with kerosene and then strike a match to me”. That is what we need in our pulpits today – preachers on fire for God. The church and world need preachers with a temperature of 105F – burning up with and for God’s message. They preach not for responses, but for God’s approval.

Third, Jeremiah knew that God’s Word was a powerful fire and could be distinguished from false fires (messages): *“‘Is not My word like fire?’ says the Lord, ‘and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces? Therefore behold, I am against the prophets,’ says the Lord, ‘who steal My words every one from his neighbor’”* (Jeremiah 23:29,30).

In a day of compromise, political correctness, fear, and ignorance of God’s Word, we need fire in our pulpits. We need the spirit of the prophets, the courage of our Savior, and the boldness of the apostles.

Why Jeremiah Had Fire in His Bones

In order to have the Jeremiah fire in our bones, pulpits, and congregations, we need to read the book of Jeremiah and note these basic reasons why he had fire in his bones:

1. Jeremiah never doubted his call from God to the point that he would give it up.
2. Jeremiah knew without a doubt the seriousness of his mission.
3. Jeremiah knew the fire in his mouth was placed there by God.
4. Jeremiah had a burden for the sinfulness of his people (read Lamentations 1:16).

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5. Jeremiah let God — not others, or himself — judge the success of his preaching.
6. Jeremiah, in spite of all the difficulties, was committed to his mission.
7. Jeremiah knew God was greater than his foes or his problems.
8. Jeremiah looked beyond his discouragement and trusted God.
9. Jeremiah knew he could not do anything else but preach.
10. Jeremiah knew he was God’s man for the times.

Jeremiah is the role model for those of us who preach, as well as those who listen to preaching. We need fire in the pulpit. This will not happen, however, until we have preachers who have fire in their mouths and bones, placed there by God (through the Word of God).

Building the Fire

Two basic things are needed to build a fire. When I was a boy, it was my job during winter to take care of all the things needed to have a fire in our fireplace or coal stove. Looking back, I find these same steps relate to building a fire in the pulpit:

First, you need a place for the fire to burn. In our home, it was a fireplace and a coal stove. This was an approved and safe place, just as the pulpit is today.

Second, you need to gather the right kind of fuel: wood, coal, and kerosene. These are the fuels essential to set and heat a fire. Likewise, the Word of God is the fuel for “heating” the pulpit and pews. This is why we preach the Word (2 Timothy 4:1-6).

Third, the fire must begin as a spark, which is fanned and then progresses to a raging, but controlled, fire that is obvious to all within its reach.

Fourth, the fire must be kept under control at all times. Shooting sparks or too much fuel will create possible problems and uncontrollable fires. This is why we must “*rightly handle the word of truth*” (2 Timothy 2:15).

Let us create a fire in our mouths and bones for preaching the Word. It is our responsibility as preachers; no one can do it for us. †

J. J. Turner is an elder and pulpit preacher for the McDonough Church of Christ, McDonough, Georgia, USA. He is the author of the new book, *Preaching Partners With God*.

THE CHURCH

Lest We Forget

J.C. Choate

It is so easy for us to see all of the problems in the church today and to become negative and discouraged. We may focus on liberalism, division, and a falling away of individuals and congregations. The future may look bleak. Some would conclude that the whole system of Christianity must be flawed. They would react by giving up and even quitting. But is this the solution? A thousand times, NO!

What we must remember is that God is still reigning and in control of things. Christ is still the Son of God and the Savior of those who will come unto Him and obey His will. The Bible is still the Word of God; it is still the truth, and the truth never changes. The church is still the Lord's spiritual body, and only the saved are added to it. That body is still beautiful and glorious and will endure forever.

While some are asking for change, we must realize that God, Christ, and the truth never change. The Lord and His way continue the same as they have always been. How could we find a better answer to our needs? How could anything be superior to the truth, the church, the kind of worship the Lord has authorized, and the Christian way of living?

It would appear that the church can never be very large in any country. The larger it grows, the more diverse the members become in their way of thinking. There are always those who are poor students of God's Word, or those who are proud and become dissatisfied with the basic teachings of the Bible, and they end up leading a group off after them into error. The longer their digression continues, the further away they get from the Lord's pattern of doing things, and finally they are swallowed up in the error of the religious world.

As much as we hate to see any soul lost to error, if there are those who persist in apostasy, then finally we must let them go, withdraw from them, and proceed to go forward with the Lord's work, in order to protect the body itself. As John explained in 1 John 2:18,19, "*Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.*"

Even in the Lord's body, from the earliest years, there were those who were not willing to be governed by Scripture. Paul wrote to Timothy, "... *for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world ...*" (2 Timothy 4:11). The

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apostle John said in 3 John 1:9, “*I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.*” Those men, and others of influence, fell into error and led others into error. In point of fact, this is how all the recognized religious bodies among believers in Christ had their beginning. So, corruption, even among Christians, is not a new problem.

Our schools also face the danger of leaving truth and teaching their students error. The larger they become, the greater the tendency on the part of some to question the Lord’s way. There are those who make a god of education, and they get too “intelligent” and too full of pride to continue to be faithful to the narrow way of Scripture. Suddenly they are “discovering” new truths, and they set out to restructure the church. They portray the ordinary members as being ignorant and blindly following “old worn-out traditions”. These people have ceased to serve and have begun now to dictate and to attempt to control the church. It is sad to think that we have such people in our colleges. While we appreciate those Christian schools that take a stand for the truth, we deplore and reject those people in our schools who have departed from the faith. As a brotherhood, we would be wise to give them up to their own destruction.

May we keep in mind that our salvation depends on our obedience to the Lord. We must be Christians only, faithful members of Jesus’ church, worshipping the Lord as He has dictated. We must stand for the truth whether anyone else stands for it or not. We must read and study God’s Word and faithfully proclaim it, whether our schools do or not.

We must go on with the Lord’s work and with evangelizing the world, although the majority may frown on it. This is the only way we can be God’s people and have His blessings to rest upon us.

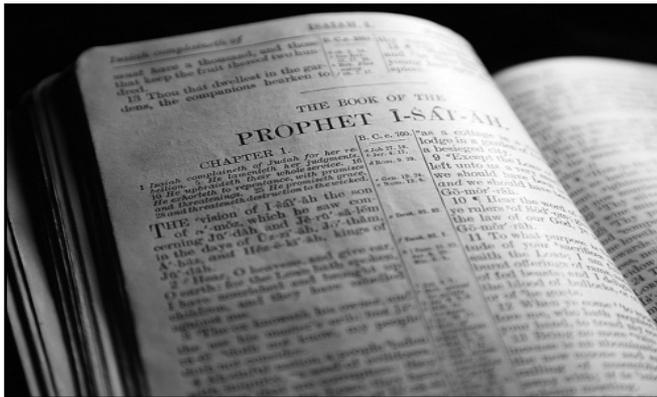
No, the church is not dead, and it is not going to die. Furthermore, there are many Christians today who are worshipping and serving the Lord faithfully. God is still reigning, and He is still in control of everything. He has blessed His people in the past, and He will continue to bless His people in the days to come. The church will be victorious in the end. Humans are flawed, but God’s perfect plan for His people in His church, as set forth in the Scriptures, contains no errors. †

J.C. Choate was founder and Editor of *The Voice of Truth International* until his death in 2008.

THE SAME OLD SONG

Bobby Dockery

The prophet Isaiah was not a popular preacher in his day. As a rule he met only ridicule and resentment! People told him he was out of date and out of touch. He was ridiculed as a teacher fit only to instruct babies! Isaiah 28:10 records a time when the religious leaders of the day mocked Isaiah's preaching with these words: "*Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line...*" Actually the original words are almost impossible to translate because they are in baby talk! The NASB has a footnote; "Hebrew monosyllables, imitating the babbling of a child, mock the prophet's preaching".



In other words, the priests and false prophets were saying, "Isaiah you keep playing the same old song like a broken record! You repeat the same old things like you are

talking to children!" With quiet dignity, Isaiah assured them: "You will learn this lesson" — if not from the mouth of God's spokesman, then at the point of an Assyrian sword! He warned that God would send them into captivity because they had ignored God's Word. In exile, they would be forced to learn and relearn the lesson they had scorned — the truth of the inexorable, inescapable judgment of God!

God deals in repetition! His Word is eternally true! It was true in the 7th century B.C., and it is true in the 21st century A.D.! There are things God wants said over and over, as plainly and simply as possible!

1. We must teach over and over that the wages of sin is death. Sin is

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

man's most basic, most immediate, most serious problem. Unfortunately, little is being said about sin from many modern pulpits! A few years ago, Dr. Karl Menninger, the well-known psychiatrist, wrote a book entitled, *Whatever Became of Sin!* In this, he observed that the word "sin" has almost disappeared from modern vocabularies. But sin has not disappeared from the Bible. People need to be told that sin is serious! It ruins lives, breaks up homes, destroys nations, and causes untold suffering. Those who take sin lightly take God lightly!

- 2. We must teach over and over that God commands all people everywhere to repent.** From the days of Isaiah until now this has been God's prescription for the world! Repentance is a word seldom heard today. But God demands it! Repentance is mentioned 969 times in the Bible. We encounter it over and over. John told Herod to repent. Jesus told the Jews, "*Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matthew 4:17). God will not overlook sin! He insists: Repent or else (Acts 17:30).
- 3. We must teach over and over that judgment is certain and hell is real!** God has fixed a day when He will judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:31). Jesus came to this world with a message of love and reconciliation with God. However, He warned that if we reject God's love, then hell is the only alternative (Matthew 10:28). A nationwide survey of preachers from all denominations showed that 75% of them deny the reality of hell. There has been an attempt to take hell out of the Bible altogether. But Jesus said more about hell than He did about heaven! An old and wise preacher once said we need to tell people about judgment and hell with "tears in our voices".
- 4. We must teach over and over that it is necessary to obey God to be saved.** From beginning to end the message of the Bible is: "*Obey God!*" (Hebrews 5:8,9). Man has no relationship with God apart from obedience. Religion not rooted in obedience is meaningless. (See 1 Samuel 15:22,23.) Jesus taught that we have no right to call Him "Lord" unless we are willing to obey His Word (Luke 6:46). We must take God seriously! We must obey His commands completely (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

The same old song! Now, as in the days of the prophets, there are things God wants repeated! †

Bobby Dockery is a writer and preacher in Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA.

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

The Gospel I Preached

Hollis Miller

“Brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you — unless you believed in vain.” So wrote the apostle Paul to the church of Christ at Corinth (1 Corinthians 15:1,2). In verses three and four, Paul defined the Gospel he preached. It embraced the death of Christ, His burial, and His resurrection.

There would have been no Gospel (Good News) in merely preaching the death of Christ, for all men die. Neither would there have been good news had Paul stopped his preaching with the burial of Christ. Men who die are buried. However, when the apostle announced that Christ arose on the third day, the Gospel message came alive. Had Paul ended with the death and burial of Christ, the Corinthians and all others would have been left as they were before his visit to their city — without hope beyond the grave.

When Paul informed the churches of Galatia that if anyone came to them with a Gospel that differed from the Gospel he had preached, they should consider such a one accursed, he was reaffirming that the death, burial, and the resurrection of Christ must be proclaimed before any so-called gospel could be counted as truth (Galatians 1:8,9). No preaching that leaves out the bodily resurrection of Jesus is Gospel preaching. So vital is the resurrection of Christ that Paul made the following declarations to the Corinthians: (1) If Christ did not rise from the grave, both Paul’s preaching and the faith of the Corinthians were void of any meaning. (2) If Christ did not rise from the grave, the Corinthians were still in their sins, and those who had fallen asleep had perished. (3) Finally, affirmed the apostle, if Christ is not risen, then *“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die”*.

How long is the resurrection of Christ to be included in Gospel preaching? Until time is no more. All who seek to redefine the bodily resurrection of Christ in order to make Him fit into some religious scheme of their own making are under the anathema announced to the Galatians by Paul. Let all who read these words forever remember that when the bodily resurrection of Christ is either denied or redefined, any “gospel” that is proclaimed is lifeless. †

Hollis Miller is an evangelist living in Murray, Kentucky, USA.

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

SANCTIFICATION AND SEXUAL PURITY

Rex Banks

By the time Paul and his party left Thessalonica, the Christian community in that city was made up mainly of those who had “*turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God*” (1 Thessalonians 1:9). Converts from paganism for the most part, they had exchanged darkness for light, ignorance for insight, and rebellion for submission. But Paul knew that old habits die hard, and he also knew that one of the besetting sins of paganism was sexual immorality. In his *Word Pictures*, A.T. Robertson wrote: “Pagan religion did not demand sexual purity of its devotees, the gods and goddesses being grossly immoral. Priestesses were in the temple for the service of the men who came... [However] God has ‘called’ us all for a decent sex life, consonant with His aims and purposes. It was necessary for Paul to place this lofty ideal before the Thessalonian Christians living in a pagan world.”

This **lofty ideal** is set forth for these brethren in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-7. Paul begins this section with (1) a reminder that he taught them “*how to walk and please God*,” (2) an acknowledgment of the fact that they actually were walking in this way, and (3) an encouragement to “*excel still more*” (4:1).

Paul is never satisfied! (cf. 3:10; 4:10). He reminds them that “*the will of God*” is their “*sanctification*” (4:1), and goes on to tell them just what this involves (vs.

2-6): “*you should [must] abstain from sexual immorality*,” “*each of you should [must] know how to possess [or acquire] his own vessel* [here

“Pagan religion did not demand sexual purity of its devotees, the gods and goddesses being grossly immoral.” ~ A.T. Robertson

likely meaning ‘wife’] *in sanctification and honour, not in lustful passion like the Gentiles who do not know God*,” and a man must not “*transgress and defraud his brother in this matter*” [by illicit relationships with another’s wife or daughter, for example]. Holiness for Paul is not an **optional extra** for the

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

Christian, but rather an essential part of His walk with the Lord.

Now, the motivation for obedience in these matters is quite simply the fact that *“the Lord is the avenger in all these things”* (4:6). Paul loves them too much to mince his words! Later, he will speak to them of the *“destruction”* which will come upon the unprepared (5:3) and remind them of the sad fact that many will spend all eternity *“away from the presence of the Lord”* (2 Thessalonians 1:9); and this will include those who practice sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 5:6-9). The apostle is deadly serious about all this. While in Thessalonica, he had *“told...and solemnly warned”* them (4:6) about these things, and though absent, he is led by the Spirit to remind them yet again that in the Gospel, God had *“called them in sanctification”* (4:7). The Christian is to walk to the beat of a different drum, and Paul is adamant that to **reject** this instruction is to reject not man, but God, the very same God who *“gives His Holy Spirit”* to the Christian (4:8). This is a sentence of death.

Brethren, have you noticed that the call to holy living does not figure prominently in **religious circles** today? When issues such as homosexuality arise, many leading “churchmen” are



quick to affirm that love does not condemn those who embrace **alternative lifestyles**. Suggestions that de facto relationships are sinful quickly evoke the *“Judge not lest ye be judged”* response, while expressions of concern about moral issues are met with dire warning about legalism and the failure to focus upon **the weightier provisions of the law**. But Jesus still said that *“fornications”* and *“adulteries”* are among the *“evil things [which] proceed from within and defile the man”* (Mark 7:21-23) — and He, after all, is the Judge of all the earth (Acts 17:31). †

Rex Banks works with the Lord’s church in Hamilton, New Zealand.

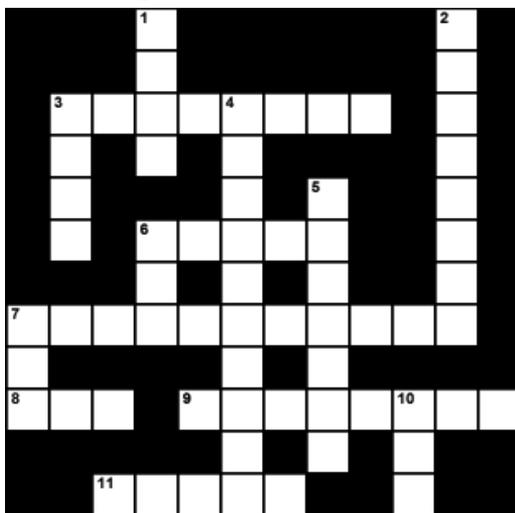
BIBLE FIND

Numbers in
the Bible

Bonnie Rushmore

Across

3. Total number of the apostles of Christ.
6. Day God created vegetation.
7. Number of books in the New Testament.
8. Number of prophetic books in the New Testament.
9. Number of books in the Bible.
11. Number of pairs of clean animals placed on the ark.



Down

1. Number of kingdoms referenced in Daniel 2.
2. Number of children fathered by Jacob.
3. Number of foolish virgins.
4. Number of books in the Old Testament.
5. The day God rested after creating the world.
6. Number of plagues in Exodus.
7. Number of pairs of unclean animals placed in the ark.
10. Number of days of creation.

Restoring the Erring

Gary C. Hampton

“Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.” (James 5:19,20)

It is obvious that James believed one could err from the truth. Yet, how can one wander from something in which he has not been? So, Christians can fall from grace. Paul told the Galatian brethren, *“Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. And I testify again to every man who become circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace”* (Galatians 5:2-4; see also 2 Timothy 2:16-18).

To turn a man back is to cause him to change course. By causing him to change course, we can save his soul from death. This would not be physical death, as all men are appointed to die once (Hebrews 9:27), but the second death described by John in Revelation 20:13-15. By causing him to seek forgiveness, his brethren are assured by James that God will hide his sins so they will be seen, or remembered, no more.

Let us take this as a challenge to be ever watchful for the safety of our brothers and sisters in Christ. If they stumble, we should go to them in humility in an attempt to restore them and see their souls saved in eternity (Galatians 6:1,2).†

Gary C. Hampton is the Director of East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions in Knoxville, Tennessee, USA.

The Mission of the Church

Dale Grissom

The mission of the church is to win lost souls. Sadly, few Christians seem to realize this fact, failing to make it a top priority in their lives. Most drift along, apparently thinking that meeting for worship and Bible study is all that is necessary, never really accepting the responsibility of winning the lost.

All too often, we neglect to read and build ourselves up through diligent study of the Word, looking instead to our Bible classes and pulpit preaching for edification. On the contrary, our Bible classes ought to be more evangelistic in nature, and the Christian's responsibility to evangelize should be stressed in more sermons.

The early church went everywhere preaching and teaching the Gospel, but the church of today is moving further and further away from that pattern. No longer are we interested in evangelizing locally, but instead, our money and prayers are concentrated on evangelism overseas. We seem to have no interest in spreading the Gospel in our own community, but have convinced our-

selves that our doors are always open to anyone who is interested. Brethren, this just won't work! We are fooling ourselves into believing that we are living up to God's command to go teach! We simply must face up to the fact that the majority of conversions come as the result of personal one-to-one teaching and study.

We must care enough to make personal evangelism a part of our lives. The Great Commission is a command for Christians to go preach, and we can go into the world and preach the Gospel by beginning in our own community. The world is all around us. Jesus said, "*If you love me keep my commandments*" (John 14:15).

Life is passing quickly; we must act while we have time and opportunity. Please carefully consider your own responsibilities as a child of God. †

Dale Grissom has been passionately involved in personal evangelism for many years, and he lives in Dexter, Missouri, USA.

MISSION-MINDEDNESS
BEGINS AT HOME!

What You Might Do to Point Someone Toward Heaven Today

Neal Pollard

- 1. Pay a compliment to someone who does not like you or know you very well.**
- 2. Choose the moral high ground, whether it be your speech, or attitude, or deed, especially if toward someone who has treated you ill.**
- 3. Say a word of encouragement to someone who seems down.**
- 4. Make a brief call, or visit, or write someone who is sick, lost, spiritually slipping, or dealing with troubles.**
- 5. Find a way to share the positive difference Christ is making in your life.**
- 6. Spend quality time with your spouse and children.**
- 7. Tell a friend or neighbor about an upcoming event at church and invite him or her to attend with you.**
- 8. Take a meal, baby-sit, mow the grass, or do some similar act of service that reveals Christ to them.**
- 9. Share a passage that you have recently found helpful with someone for whom it might have direct application to a life situation.**
- 10. Pray for opportunities to share Christ, look for them, and seize them.**

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

11. Never miss an opportunity to smile and say “hello” – even to STRANGERS!
12. Read your Bible while on the plane, bus, carpool, etc. – it rarely fails to start a spiritual conversation.
13. Spend time studying God’s Word on a subject that will help make you a better soul-winner.
14. Invite a new Christian over for dinner or coffee and dessert.
15. Repay evil with good.
16. Turn the other cheek.
17. Go the second mile.
18. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt.
19. Redeem the time (people are always watching, even the ones you cannot watch watching you).
20. Pay a kindness to the elderly and the very young – they most need and appreciate it.
21. Contact a missionary who likely has just been, is, or will soon be under stress or burdened or discouraged.
22. Give a book, track, or bulletin that might be helpful to a non-Christian over whom you have influence.
23. Offer a sympathetic ear.
24. Shed a sympathizing tear.
25. Fill your life and heart with whatever is true, noble, just, pure, lovely, and of good report – good influence will virtually ooze out of your pores. †

Neal Pollard preaches for the Bear Valley Church of Christ in Denver, Colorado, USA.

Is “Different” Good or Bad?

Jimmy Jividen

Quite often I have heard worship leaders say, “I want to do something different...” Is this good or bad?

If different is closer to the purpose and practice of worship that is taught in the Scriptures, it is good. Restoration is taking place.

If different is departing from the purpose and practice of worshipping that is taught in the Scriptures, it is bad. Apostasy is taking place. There is no merit in being different for the sake of being different.

Church leaders in every generation have had a double problem in maintaining acceptable worship to God. On the one hand, there are the encrustations of human traditions from the past which cover the true purposes and practices of praise. On the other hand, there is the tidal wave of conformity to the present culture which covers the true practices and purposes of worshipping God. Whether it is human traditions from the past or the tidal wave of culture conformity, anything different from the purpose or practices of the New Testament church is apostasy. Jesus condemned such. *“You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, ‘This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men’”* (Matthew 15:7-9).

There is a need for every generation for the “restoration of worship”. This does not come from changing praise to God to performances to please men. This does not come from changing the forms and purposes of worship that were taught and practiced in the New Testament church. This does not come from making Christian worship a manipulated, emotional purging like pagan ecstasy. What is always needed is to make worship a spiritual involvement of the heart, mind, and spirit of man. What is always needed is to worship in truth — doing what God has authorized in a way that pleases Him. If this is different from the way we did or did not do it in either the past or present, so be it. The criteria for acceptable worship is not conformity to either past traditions or present culture, but to what is taught in Scripture. †

Jimmy Jividen is a writer and preacher living in Abilene, Texas, USA.

WORSHIP

Some Things Are Greater Than Sacrifice

Cecil May Jr.

“Sacrifice” stands for the ceremonies and ritual of prescribed worship. The Bible says two things are greater than sacrifice. This does not mean regular worship forms are unimportant. It does remind us that other things are even more important.



Obedience Is Better Than Sacrifice

King Saul was commanded by God to utterly destroy the Amalekites, every man, woman, and child, and all their stock and herds. He went to battle, and with the help of God, prevailed, but he saved King Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle alive. When Samuel challenged him for not obeying the

WORSHIP

voice of the Lord, Saul made excuse.

And Saul said, *"The people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gikal."*

Then Samuel said, *"Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams"* (1 Samuel 15:21-22).

Offering sacrifice was, itself, a command of God. The people of Israel could not obey God without it. But to disobey Him in other matters in order to worship was not acceptable. Performing even correct rituals of worship does not excuse a life lived in disobedience.

Mercy is Better than Sacrifice

Hosea spoke to the faithless people of Israel and Judah. They assembled, and they participated in prescribed worship, some even as priests, but they were robbers and murderers who committed horrible crimes against their fellow countrymen. To them God said, *"I desire mercy and not sacrifice and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings"* (Hosea 6:6).

Twice Jesus cited this word of Hosea. When the Pharisees objected to the time He spent with sinners (Matthew 9:13), and when He broke their traditions by gleaning grain on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:7), Jesus said that if they understood this saying, they would understand what He was about.

Micah made the same point in his prophesy, *"With what shall I come before the Lord? With burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams or ten thousand rivers of oil?"* No, that is not what God desires. *"He has shown you, O man what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God"* (Micah 6:6-8)?

To translate that into our terms: It is important to assemble, pray, and take the Lord's supper on the Lord's Day. But it is even more important to love our neighbor, to seek to serve the Lord in humble obedience, to treat others as we want to be treated, and to minister to those in need.

Regular worship, even according to the commandments of God, does not substitute for doing God's will in everyday life, nor does it allow for unmerciful treatment or exploitation of others. †

Cecil May Jr. is Dean of the Bible Department at Faulkner University in Montgomery, Alabama, USA.

On Worship

Dalton Key

David was happy to hear the words, “*Let us go into the house of the Lord*” (Psalms 122:1). The apostle Paul tarried in Troas seven days until the Lord’s Day when he could come together with the disciples “*to break bread*” — to worship (Acts 20:6,7). Earlier, in Philippi, Paul and Silas, finding themselves in prison, made good use of their time as they “... *prayed, and sang praises unto God...*” (Acts 16:25). The spirits of the righteous have always been made stronger through pure and proper worship.

And yet, there is more to worship than what we get out of it. Yes, the blessings we receive from worship are not by any means the purpose of worship. The wonderful benefits of renewal, hope, strength — these are not to be confused with the rightful purpose, the moving motivation behind our worship. Worship has as its central, fundamental purpose the praise, adoration, and glorification of God. Worship is directed, first, foremost, and always, to God.

The moment we take our eyes off heaven, problems begin to emerge. Neglecting God as the sole object of worship, we’ve begun worshipping self — even in our own assemblies.

We hear more about “feeling good about ourselves” than about pleasing the Father in heaven. We’ve come to exchange reverence for entertainment. We aren’t nearly so concerned with magnifying God as we are with “feeling good” when we leave the building. Worship is judged as a success or failure depending only on how we “feel” as we depart the assembly. The prayers, the songs, the sermon are all critiqued for nothing more than their entertainment appeal.

In many churches, hand-clapping has become the rule. After all, a good performance deserves a round of applause, doesn’t it? Truth is forgotten, and God is forsaken. “*Decency and order*” are words acceptable for Paul’s day, but not for ours. We will be entertained! Now, really, who are we worshipping — God, or self?

Yes, we have overstated the case. At least, we hope the foregoing is an overstatement. And, yes, we should be joyful in our worship. We should leave uplifted. Yet, when these benefits are mistaken for our **purpose** for worshipping, we soon find ourselves neck deep in the mire of apostasy. Our worship must be tested first, not by its crowd appeal, not by its entertainment value, not by its excitement, but rather by its acceptance by God. †

Dalton Key is the Editor of *Old Paths* and preaches for the 10th and Rockford congregation in Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA.

WORSHIP

Some Reasons for Observing the Lord's Supper

Ardron Hinton

1. Jesus specified it as one of the activities in His kingdom. His kingdom came with power on the next Day of Pentecost.
2. He requested no statues or temples as His memorials, but instead requested a memorial act that is based in the heart.
3. Our remembrance of His sacrifice was not to be dependent on human artistic talents. Each person was to create his own scene in his heart. For example, a view of Calvary should be inside the person, not before his eyes. When predicting the New Covenant, Jesus said it would be for the heart.
4. Neither Jesus nor His Spirit-guided spokesmen authorized earthly shrines. Instead of focusing on an earthly place, focus is on a spiritual activity that can be done by ordinary people anywhere. By this simple act, believers around the world stand together on common ground. This is hindered by adding human ritual and requirements. As Jesus instituted it, the Lord's Supper is simple, and it can be observed by ordinary people meeting in a house or under a tree.
5. By a regular observance of the Lord's Supper, we tell the world we have not forgotten what Jesus did for us. It unites the first coming of Jesus with the second.
6. The Lord's Supper is to be observed to keep Christ's death on our minds. We must not forget what He endured for us. What better way to begin the week than with a simple observance to refresh our memories regarding His love for us. Neglecting the Lord's Supper, or the heart not being in it, leads to spiritual sickness. †

Ardron Hinton works with the Church of Christ in Roosevelt, Oklahoma, USA.

“...this do in remembrance of me...”

The Heart of the Problem

Paul Harvey

Pick a day, any day. Pick a newspaper, any paper . . .

Fighting in Israel, hatred in Haiti, war in Bosnia, Yemen, Rawanda, fraud in the United States and the United Kingdom, neo-fascists in Italy, neo-communists in Poland; lawsuits, racism, scandal, drugs.

Singapore's senior minister, Lee Kuan Yew, recently observed, "Human beings, regrettable though it may be, are inherently vicious . . ."

On this planet in rebellion, he's right, of course. Crime, divorce, abortion, incompetence, greed, irresponsibility come naturally to us.

Public officials seek remedies for ills we seem helpless to prevent. We pile laws upon laws, seeking salvation by legislation because the 10 that Moses brought down from the mountain are too simple to be significant.

Why is there crime? People choose to meet their own needs — real or perceived — at the expense of other people.

Why is there war? Nations choose to meet their own needs at the expense of other people.

Why is there divorce? Husbands and wives forsake each other's interests in pursuit of their own.

Why is there racism, alcoholism, child abuse, animal abuse, lying, cheating, greed, laziness, teen pregnancy? The answer's the same: "Me first; you ... whenever."

Like undisciplined children, we lie on the floor, threatening to "hold our breath until we turn blue", whining and complaining and demanding.

So how do we make self-centered whiners into self-disciplined adults? More government programs, more regulations? Communism tried that and failed.

What if, as a last resort, we go back to the bookshelf? Spaceship Earth came with a book of instructions. Let's see what it says.

It says we should not be slothful in business; in fact, it says he who does not work — let him not eat.

It says women should wear modest apparel.

It says don't steal anything — *anything!*

It says don't get drunk — period.

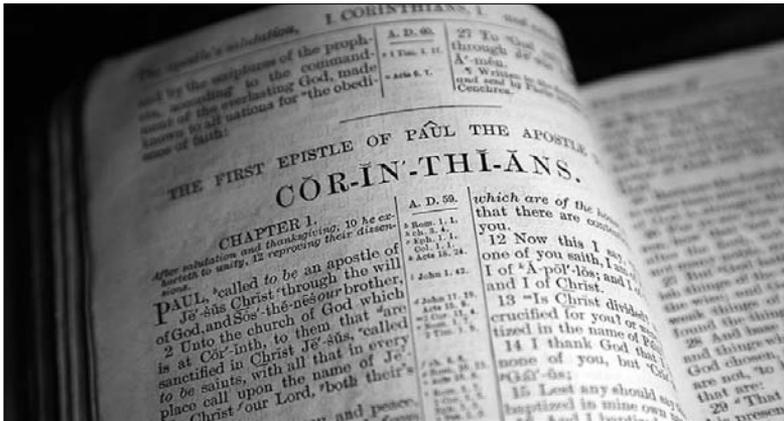
It says you sleep with your own wife.

It says you don't do what you "want", you do what you "ought", and for those whose consciences are anesthetized, it specifies which is which.

Even if that Book were not a divinely inspired road map from here to hereafter, it would still be the best rule book for a good life here.

We can ignore that Book or deny it. We can challenge it, revile it, rewrite it, reject it . . .

But when we have done our worst, it will still be here waiting for us, haunting us, calling out to us, "Behave or be damned, believe and be saved".



Envy

Wilkin Tom O'Neal

Aesop had a fable about two eagles, one envious of the other because the other could soar higher and more elegantly than he could. So the envious eagle would pluck his strongest feathers from his own body and shoot them as arrows, trying to wound or kill the other eagle. It was his own undoing, however. He could not hit the high flying eagle, and he was eventually grounded by his lack of feathers. Envy destroyed the eagle.

Envy is one of the many sins listed in Romans 1:29. If we let envy have its way, it will only get bigger and bigger until it destroys us — like the eagle that was destroyed.

My parents owned a lumberyard, and I remember many a time getting a splinter. Did I leave it in there, never trying to get it out? OF COURSE NOT! I immediately began to dig it out of my hand, to get rid of it. The same is true with envy (or any sin). It needs to be removed so we can conform to God's Word and continue to strive to be what God would have us to be in this world. *"For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace"* (James 3:16-18).

"Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth" (1 Corinthians 13:4-6).

"Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts" (Romans 13:13).

Envy was what helped to crucify Jesus. *"For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy"* (Mark 15:10). Solomon penned, *"A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of bones"* (Proverbs 14:30).

One of the most destructive attitudes among God's people is the sin of envy. It divides churches, separates families, and results in lies, deceit, hatred, and, ultimately, the eternal loss of the souls involved.

Don't let envy destroy your soul. Root it out and replace it with love †

My Battle with Parkinson's Disease

Greely Kirkpatrick

In 2004, I was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. It affects different people in different ways. You may have seen Michael J. Fox and his dyskinesia (uncontrollable movement). Other people become extremely inflexible. As for me, I have left side hand/arm tremors with noticeable fatigue.

My diagnosis was a shock because I have always been healthy. In the past, I have wondered how I would react if some dreaded disease were to attack my body. Would my faith be strong enough to cope and still live for Christ? Or would I crumble and fall apart? I am glad to say the former is true. Not that I am glorying in myself, but in God and His power and presence. He has supplied the strength just as He has promised. I love Paul's words in Philippians 4:19, "*And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*" I believe and trust in that promise.

One of the worst things is that I can no longer preach publicly. Left side tremors are somewhat violent when I try to speak in public, even when leading a prayer (hope no one is peeking, because it would not be a pretty sight). Thankfully, I can still teach a small class without too much distraction.

My brethren have been wonderful in their compassion and understanding. I simply cannot say enough about how I have been treated by God's people. Of course, this is how it should be, as we are followers of Him who showed great compassion for others. Matthew 9:36 tells us, "*But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep without a shepherd.*" How grateful I am for the love of Jesus and His disciples!

Having a debilitating disease will certainly try one's faith. However, it will also strengthen one's faith, if that person is centered on Christ. Many problems come with illnesses, but there are also some blessings: for example, an improved prayer life. Parkinson's affects the sleep pattern. As a result of awakening at 3 a.m., I have found myself praying for the entire congregation at Sparta, Missouri. Also, one can become closer in his personal relationships

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

with family and friends, not to mention becoming more compassionate for others who suffer. Best of all, you can become closer to Him who loves you. Paul speaks of his battle with his “thorn in the flesh” in 2 Corinthians 12:9, *“And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”* That verse has new meaning for me. To Him be the glory! †

Greely Kirkpatrick continues to serve in the Lord’s church in Sparta, Missouri, and he lives in Nixa, Missouri, USA.

When the Waves Rush In

Janet Jenkins

When the storms of life come and go, man must be prepared to dig in a little deeper like the old oak tree that endures nature’s punishment. Its roots grow deep and yet in time can stand straight and tall again. This kind of strength in man promotes contentment, happiness, and permanency. From every catastrophe that knocks man down, he must get up and go on. Between rest periods, he must prepare to face the next encounter courageously.

Job learned that righteous people do not have a hedge of protection. Man cannot expect to be protected from every wave of affliction. If one faints in the day of adversity, then strength is small (Proverbs 24:10). †

“Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God” (Psalm 43:5 NKJV).

As Time Rolls On...

David A. Sargent

Mark Brouwer has some keen insights on how we measure time:

The first mechanical clocks appeared in the 13th century, and signaled a subtle shift in the way we measure and think about time. They ushered in the concept of exact time — no longer just dawn, noon, mid-day — now 6:03, 12:00, and 3:20. Today our ability to divide and measure time has grown into insane proportions. For example, a cesium clock divides a second into 9,192,631,770 parts. As James Burke wryly observes, now we can capture the “smallest elements of existence and learn more and more about less and less.” We can divide time into the smallest of increments, but in so doing we miss the big picture.

“Exact time” actually does confuse us, because marking duration by a clock can give us a false impression of time.

The clock is round; it moves in circles, endlessly repeating. Digital clocks give the same impression. They make you think that time is cyclical. You go through a day, but the next morning when you wake, it’s the same time again. It can seem like an infinitely repeating cycle; every day, time repeats itself.

But it doesn’t! And the dawn of each year reminds us of that. At some point, we realize that the days add up, and after we’ve lived them — they’re gone, never to return.

Time is linear, not cyclical. The days do not repeat themselves; they are finite, and we lose them one by one. And the clock keeps ticking.

The Bible gives great and practical insight into this subject. In Psalm 90 we’re instructed to pray, “*So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom*” (Psalm 90:12).

Instead of “killing time,” we should be “*redeeming the time*” (Ephesians 5:15,16), making the most of our limited time by focusing on those things that are most important: our family, our friends, and our relationship with God!

When we look at the big picture, we realize that it is our relationship with God that is most important, for it has eternal consequences: “*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Romans 6:23).

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

God loves us so much that He gave His Son to die for our sins (Ephesians 1:7) so that we might live with Him forever (1 John 2:25). God has promised to give eternal life to those who believe and trust Jesus (Acts 16:30,31), turn from sin in repentance (Acts 17:30,31), confess Jesus before men (Romans 10:9,10), and are baptized (immersed) in His name for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38).

How we use our time now determines our eternal destination. God has decreed: the best — and eternally blessed — way to use our time is to follow Him in submission and service!

Isn't it about time for you to follow Him?



David A. Sargent is the preacher for the Creekwood Church of Christ in Mobile, Alabama, USA.

Your Choice

Charles V. Cash

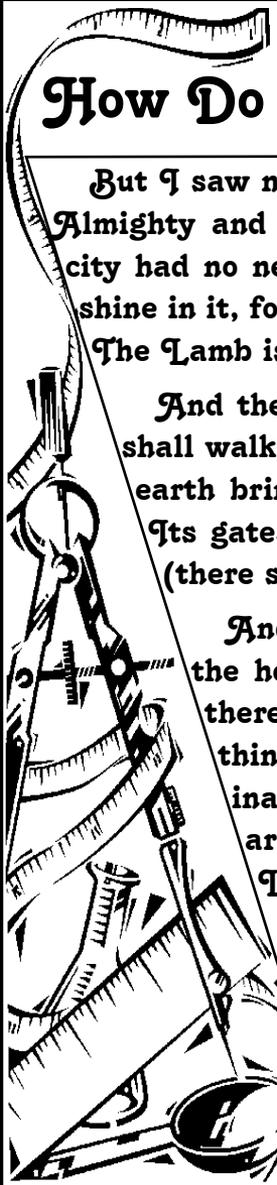
In the Canadian Rockies is a stream called Divide Creek. At a point in its course, the creek divides around a large boulder. Waters that flow to the left of the boulder rush on into Kicking Horse River, and finally into the Pacific Ocean. Waters that travel to the right flow into the Bow River, which courses into the Saskatchewan River, on into Lake Winnipeg, the Nelson River, Hudson Bay, and to the Atlantic Ocean. Once the waters divide at the rock, there is no turning back.

How like life this is. Decisions are made daily. Life is a series of decisions. Some are very difficult and complicated, with far-reaching results. What we wouldn't give sometimes to have an opportunity to make a certain decision again! It behooves all of us to weigh our decisions carefully. Things of seemingly immediate value will not necessarily be of ultimate value. Always take the long-range view!

We choose our priorities and lifestyles. Should we not ask, "What sort of person do I want to be?" The demands and offers of God every person must accept or reject. "Choices are the hinges of eternity." The option remains the same, "*Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve*" (Joshua 24:15).



Charles V. Cash is a Gospel preacher working with the Eastgate Church of Christ in Siloam Springs, Arkansas, USA.



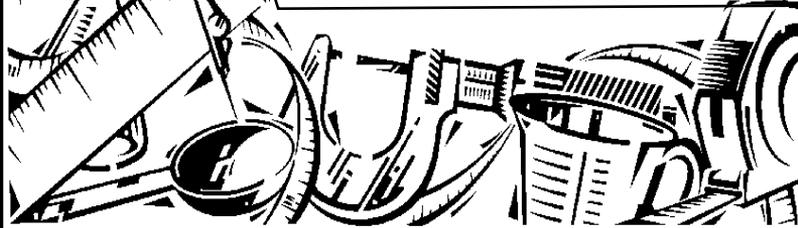
How Do You Measure Up?

But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.

And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there).

And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Revelation 21:22-27



Chains of Endearment

Randall Caselman

Our culture continues to promote the myth that marriage is outdated and old-fashioned, a relic of our Victorian past. Today an ever-increasing number of couples are deciding that a day-to-day relationship is the longest commitment they are going to make to one another. They vow to remain faithful until feelings depart.

A relationship based upon feelings alone is destined to failure. There must be more to family than feelings. In order for a marriage to succeed, we must be bound together with chains of endearment.

What Are Some Chains that Will Bind Us Together?

The Chain of Commitment. Marriages fail because there is no long-term commitment. Divorce has become an option. We go into marriage with the idea that if this doesn't work out, we'll get a divorce and marry another. It is time we sit down with our

spouse and talk about our commitment to one another. Don't allow divorce to be an option. Vow to stay together!

The Chain of Romance. Don't let the flame die. We must never take one another for granted. Watch your language. Talk to one another as young lovers; say the things you used to say. Frequent acts of kindness expressed in dating should re-occur in marriage: cards, flowers, candy, jewelry, intimate evenings out at a fine restaurant. When was the last time we opened the car door for our wives? When was the last time we held hands at an ice cream parlor? Our togetherness must never become mechanical.

The Chain of Remembrance. Share the memories. Recall the past. Talk of the good times and how we overcame the bad times. Remembering the past can provide strength for today. I never tire of hearing Mom and Dad reminisce about the farm, the church, family, and the good times

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shared. It is a joy to remember when....

The Chain of Prayer. It is true, isn't it? The family that prays together stays together. Nothing, *nothing* draws us closer to one another than praying together. There is just something about hearing our spouse bring our name before the throne of God, begging Him to bless our relationship. That's powerful stuff!

The Chain of Forgiveness. Love refuses to file away past wrongs. We will all make mistakes, sometimes serious ones. In marriage, it makes sense to have a good forgetter and a passionate forgiver. When this works, partners can move on quickly to the next exploit without baggage from a previous incident. Learn to forgive!

The Chain of Freshness. Do something you've never done before. Our lives can become mundane and

predictable, *to work, home, to work, home.* Marriages fall into the same-o-same-o. Life can become a drag. Spice it up! Make a memory!

Our one-anotherness is strengthened by our relationship with God. Marriage is more than just a relationship between two people. God must be a part of our togetherness. Here it is, the closer we get to Him, the closer we get to one another.

Bind us together, Lord,
Bind us together, Lord,
Bind us together with chains of
love.
Bind us together, Lord,
Bind us together, Lord,
With chains that cannot be
broken. †

Randall Caselman is the preacher for the Church of Christ in Bella Vista, Arkansas, USA.

A stranger you were once.
Then, with a gentle look you took my hand.
As our lives engaged,
you lit my life and I held both your hands.
Now that decades have passed,
ours souls have indeed become one.
How fortunate we are
that we have found the love so true
that everyone dreams about.

- Laura Veronica Merodio

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God's Mothers

Dan R. Owen

It would be difficult to find a more powerful partnership than the one that exists between the Almighty and mothers who give their lives to Him. These mothers are powerful conduits of divine influence, mediating the work of God in the lives of children everywhere. Today, the children of those women who fear the Lord rise up and call them blessed. Today, we honor the work of God in the lives of those women who yield themselves as instruments of righteousness and who make themselves vessels for noble purposes, holy, and prepared for the Master's use. God's partnership with these mothers spans all the generations of life.

Praying women like Hannah begin their partnership with God before their babies are even conceived. They ask God to work before their children are even born. God works in the secret places of a mother's womb to shape and form the tiny human being who will be each woman's charge. The result of this wonder is the birth of a living immortal person.

God's partnership continues in the lives of young mothers who love God. As they nurture their little children, protect them, and care for them, they do the work of God. Like Jochebed, who protected her baby son and was willing to take a lowly position as his nurse in order to love him and pass along his heritage, young mothers who instill God in the hearts of their children are heroes of the kingdom.

God works with those mothers of teenage children who, like Mary, sometimes want to pull their hair out in frustration. Like Mary, who searched for her son for three days and said, "*Son, why have you treated us like this?*" Godly mothers of teens endure anxiety and frustration along with the joy and pride they experience as they see their children become young adults. Such mothers love, no matter what, and they continue to guide their children in the will of God.

God continues His partnership with mothers of adult children, as these mothers become trusted friends and confidants. Such mothers encourage, pray, support, and stand ready to help in times of need. They mother their grandchildren again, extending their influence to still another generation of God's people.

Who can estimate the power of the influence of God's mothers? Many of

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the preachers, elders, deacons, missionaries, Bible school teachers, and compassionate servants of today's church show the fruit of God's work through wonderful Christian mothers! It is not just women we exalt, for not all women are instruments of God. It is not just mothers we honor, for not all mothers are vessels of God's power. It is God's wonderful work in the lives of women who submit to Him that we glorify. May God bless all of you mothers who have given your hearts to God and, as a result, have allowed God to use your life to influence a generation of children. There is no greater work in the kingdom than the work of God's mothers! †

Dan R. Owen preaches for the Broadway Church of Christ in Paducah, Kentucky, USA.

Every Child Will Follow Someone

Earlene Rose

Every child will follow someone;
We never know just whose
Life will be his pattern;
Whose examples he will use.

A son may mimic father,
Try to copy how he walks;
Listen to his father's stories;
Use his language when he talks.

A daughter may use mother
To set her standards by,
And things she sees her mother do
Are things she wants to try.

Whether relative or neighbor,
A pattern you may be.
Every child will follow someone,
And it might be you or me.

PROVERBS 17:22



I didn't know if my granddaughter had learned her colors yet, so I decided to test her. I would point out something and ask what color it was. She would tell me, and she was always correct. It was fun for me, so I continued. At last she headed for the door, saying, "Grandma, I think you should try to figure out some of these yourself!"



A couple of good ol' boys decided to go on a REAL fishing trip. They rented all the equipment — the reels, the rods, the wading suits, the rowboat, the car, and even a cabin in the woods. They spent a fortune!

The first day they didn't catch anything. The same thing happened on the second day, and on the third day. It continued like that until finally, on the last day of their vacation,

one of them caught a fish.

As they were driving home they were really depressed. One guy turned to the other and said, "Do you realize that this one lousy fish we caught cost us fifteen hundred bucks?"

The other guy said, "Wow! Then it's a good thing we didn't catch any more!"



A man hadn't been feeling well, so he went to his doctor for a complete checkup. Afterward, the doctor came out with the results.

"I'm afraid I have some very bad news," the doctor said. "You're dying, and you don't have much time left."

"Oh, that's terrible!" said the man. "How long have I got?"

The doctor sadly said, "Ten."

"Ten?" the man asked. "Ten what? Months? Weeks? What?!"

"Nine..."



There was a brother in church who couldn't sing a lick, but sang at the top of his lungs. A few members complained and asked if he could sing a little lower. However, the brother continued singing as loud as he could.

Finally, a few members went to the preacher with the problem. The

PROVERBS 17:22

preacher suggested to the brother that maybe he should sing lower. The brother asked, “Why should I sing lower?”

The preacher said, “Because five or six members told me you can’t sing.”

“That’s nothing,” the brother answered, “Fifty members told me you can’t preach!”



Richard opened the morning newspaper and was dumbfounded to read in the obituary column that he had died. He quickly phoned his best friend, Fred.

“Did you see the paper?” asked Richard. “They say I died!”

“Yes, I saw it!” answered Fred. “Where are you callin’ from?”



As he was standing in line at the grocery store checkout counter, a friend of John’s noticed he was purchasing a dozen roses and a card.

“You in trouble with your wife?” the friend asked John.

“Nope!” was John’s reply. “Preventive maintenance.”



Man: “Just look at that young person with the short hair and blue

jeans. Is it a boy or a girl?”

Bystander: “It’s a girl. She’s my daughter.”

Man: “Oh, please forgive me, sir. I had no idea you were her father.”

Bystander: “I’m not. I’m her mother.”



A fisherman returned to shore with a giant marlin that was bigger and heavier than he was. On the way to the cleaning shed, he ran into a second fisherman who had a stringer with a dozen baby minnows. The second fisherman looked at the marlin, then turned to the first fisherman and said, “Only caught one, eh?”



Just stop and think about it for a minute. Do illiterate people get the full effect of alphabet soup?



The man walked over to the perfume counter and told the clerk he’d like a bottle of Chanel #5 for his wife’s birthday.

“A little surprise, eh?” smiled the clerk.

“You’d better believe it,” answered the man. “She’s expecting a cruise.”



5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY

The Gospel of Jesus Christ

Paula Bates

1. Mark 1:1 The _____ of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of _____.
2. Mark 1:14 Now after _____ was put in prison, Jesus came to _____, preaching the _____ of the kingdom of God.
3. Matthew 4:23 And _____ went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, _____ the _____ of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.
4. Matthew 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the _____ as a witness to all the _____ and then the end will come.
5. Romans 1:16 For I am not _____ of the gospel of Christ for it is the _____ of God to _____ for everyone who believes, for the _____ first and also for the _____.
6. 2 Corinthians 4:3,4 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are _____, whose minds the god of this age has _____, who do not _____, lest the light of the Gospel of the glory of _____, who is the image of God, should shine on them.



1. Beginning, God
2. John, Galilee, gospel
3. Jesus, preaching, gospel
4. World, nations
5. Ashamed, power, salvation, Jew, Greek
6. Perishing, blinded, believe, Christ

Answers:



A Fair World

SPC Alex Gibson

The subject that I am about to write on is one that I freely confess is a hard one. I want to talk about the concept of “a fair world”. This topic came up when a friend of mine called me, asking advice in how to comfort a coworker whose family was killed in a car wreck. The conversation was kind of a hard one because she isn’t a Christian, meaning that as soon as I mentioned prayer she snapped at me, asking how a God who loves all people could allow something so tragic to happen to a good person like her friend? The question is well worth asking, but the answer is seldom wanted.

Most of the time people lash out in their pain, but when my friend said that it seemed so unfair and that it sounded more like a cruel god than a loving God, I answered her saying how it was totally fair that the family of an EMT was killed in a car crash. The silence on the other end of the phone followed by a, “What the...?” signaled that I had gotten her attention, as I’m guessing I now have yours.

The truth is that the rain falls on the just and unjust alike, and it is all very fair indeed, the same way it is fair that I as a soldier am sent to places I’ve never been to defend a country which is more interested in football than its own state of government. For proof of that, see how many football teams you can name or coaches or whatever statistics you like, and then make a list of all the Congressmen or even tell me who is the Mayor of your town. Anyway, back on

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subject of where is God in all of this and why do I say these things are fair. . . .

In Matthew 5:43-48, we are told, “*You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your **enemies**, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you [this describes, also, the behavior of those who have made themselves enemies of God], that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*”

“*For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.*” [These verses explain that God allows both good and evil people the time in this life to choose Him.]

The reason for all of this lies in God’s love and His perfection, believe it or not. Let’s take a look at this. If God were to say, “I love you, Alex, so I’m never going to let you do what will hurt you or others, and I’m never going to let others do things that will hurt you,” then most of my actions (and the actions of others) would be limited. I could no more then freely choose to do what was right or wrong because the choice would already be made for me. That means I could never sin, and that also means I could never actively choose to have a relationship with God; again, the choice would be made for me. That would be *spiritual rape*, possession without consent! And the last time I checked, that was not something God does. He allows us free will, the ability to choose to do our own thing — which also means the ability to hurt others. If God came in and removed that ability from me, then I would only be able to hurt myself. And while that would be an odd state of affairs, it would still be very much the same as having no choice at all. The explanation, again, lies in total free will. Now, I have already written on pain and how it is not God’s *desire* for us to be in pain, but rather it is the outcome of mankind choosing to leave Him. And this is simply the same principle played out across humanity, as apposed to a single individual.

The drunk driver who crashes into another car, killing all involved, is totally in the wrong, but it is still only *his* fault, not God’s. Do you not think that God is grieved by such a thing? Of course He is, for the drunk driver and for all the choices and influences that brought him to that point, and for the family who was hurt by those actions. People often times think of God as a cold, distant figure watching the world like it’s a snow globe. But the truth is, He is there in the thick of all of it. God does not interfere, not because He lacks

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power or love, but because He respects everyone's free will — even the free will of those whom we consider to be evil.

The truth is that when you ask how this is fair, you are not really asking for a *fair* world but rather one of *grace* and *mercy*. You want the good person to be rewarded with kindness and safety and mercy, and the evil people to be redeemed or, in some cases, punished for their crimes. And that is what God promises us: that in spite of the pain we see now (which is very little of what is out there), what was and is ultimately planned for the entire creation makes it worth the pain and suffering, in the end.

Being a Christian involves trusting in God through the hard times, and seeing in the face of sorrow an opportunity to love and to heal the hurts in peoples' lives. Perhaps the best example of this is when Jesus raised Lazarus. Even though He knew what He was going to do when He got to the grave, His first response to the family was to grieve with them.

I want to end this particular article by asking several questions.

- If God, being a God of love, determined it worth the cost to create the world, knowing what it would become, then what do you think the end result will be when all is said and done? Will it be like we are told in Romans 8:18-22? *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.”*
- In regard to the bad things that come in this world, isn't it more accurate to say when we cry out, “It's not fair!” in the face of pain, that what we are really saying it's all *too* fair and we actually want *mercy* instead of *payment for the sins* in our life?
- Isn't it strange that, when we are hurting the most, that's when our enemy would be most successful in deepening the wound by distancing us from the source of healing?

If you have questions or answers you want to share, please, by all means send me some feedback. My email address is zex1@hotmail.com †

Alex Gibson is currently stationed at Fort Campbell, KY, USA.

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Working Our Way to Heaven?

Ashley Bates

Have you ever heard someone being accused of “working his or her way to heaven”? Can we work our way to heaven? What purpose do our works have, as Christians? Are they essential to our salvation?

This is a topic that I hear many people questioning. Let us take the time to see what God says. Throughout the entire Bible we are told that faith results in good works. James 2:17 warns us that *“faith without works is dead.”* Therefore this leads me to believe that it is not possible to be a faithful Christian without works. Jesus himself even performed many works throughout His walk on earth.

Personally, I have been accused of trying to work my way to heaven. The Bible commands us to help those less fortunate than ourselves. We are not to boast of what we do because it should be done for God’s glory and not to be seen and glorified by man. Ephesians 2: 8-10 discusses our works by stating, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, cre-*

ated in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Therefore, we should walk in good works for the Lord and not proclaim to be better than anyone else because of the works we do. We do not *work our way to heaven*, as can be understood in the passage in Ephesians.

So, many people ask, “If we do not work our way to heaven, what is the purpose of these works?” Matthew 5:16 states, *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”* Our works as a Christian have an impact on those in our lives. For example, I am an undergraduate student at Harding University and daily have the opportunity to impact the lives of those in the community of Searcy, Arkansas. We can serve in so many simple ways, to have a tremendous impact on our local communities and to help spread the Gospel to those who need it.

Are works as a Christian essential to our salvation if they do not help us gain admittance to heaven? James 2: 26 is one of my favorite verses to ref-

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erence when I am accused of “working” my way to heaven. This verse tells us, “*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*” We show our *faith* through our *works*, as explained in James 2:18.

We all know that faith is essential to our salvation, so if “*faith without works is dead*”, doesn’t this clearly tell us that our works are an essential aspect to our salvation? I believe this is exactly what is being said. We must remember, as we are told in James 2:19, “*the devils also believe and tremble.*” Clearly belief, alone, is not enough for our salvation.

Another of my favorite passages that teach us to perform good works is I Timothy 6:17-19, “*Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, **that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;** laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, **that they may lay hold on eternal life.**”*

A true and faithful Christian is steadfast to complete good works and to help those in need. We all have gifts that we can use to bring light into the lives of those in need. Our good works are happiness to those who are hurting. I know I will never forget the Christians in my life who performed

good works and helped me in my time of need.

May I give you the charge to be as the man described in James 2? Verse 18 says, “*Yea a man may say, thou hast faith and I have works: shew me thy faith without works, and I will shew you my faith by my works.*” Be the one who shows your faith through your works, because faith alone is simply belief and is dead, as we are told through James 2.

Faith is, indeed, greatly important but don’t let this be the only thing that sets you apart as a Christian. Always ask yourself if those who do not know you are able to tell that you are a Christian by the deeds you perform each day of the week.

“Works” are simply those actions that prove that we have committed our lives to God. For example, we are commanded to be baptized to wash away our sins. Baptism makes our commitment and confession known publicly and shows that we are seriously taking up our cross to follow Christ. Baptism is a work in itself, proving our obedience to the Gospel. Our works will not be what take us to heaven, but they distinguish us from others here on earth who have no living faith.

I would love to hear feedback, abates3@harding.edu. God bless. ☩

Ashley L. Bates was converted at the Mississippi Delta Community College Student Center.



The Handwriting on the Wall

Maxie B. Boren

The Bible is filled with great lessons for us to learn and profit by. All we need to do is read them and really think about them, and then apply what we learn to our own lives. Remember, “*All scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable...*” (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

In the fifth chapter of the book of Daniel, we find the story of King Belshazzar of Babylon. He was a

man whose heart was filled with self-importance. Opulent, lavish, and indulgent, he made a great feast for the elite of his kingdom, during which time he “*praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone*” (5:4). In the same hour in which he offered praise to these inanimate “gods”, he saw a man’s hand write on the wall of the palace. From the context, we might

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well imagine his astonishment. In fact, *“His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way”* (verse 6, NIV). Summoning the wise men of his kingdom, he discovered them incapable of interpreting the writing on the wall. The queen remembered Daniel, and told the king of him. He was brought before Belshazzar and offered great reward if he could interpret the message. Declining the gift, Daniel nonetheless expounded to the king the meaning.

Reminding Belshazzar of his father’s reign before him, Daniel told of how God had blessed Nebuchadnezzar immeasurably. Yet, because of his pride, God took Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom from him, that he might come to know *“that the most high God rules in the kingdoms of men”* (verse 21). Then Daniel drove home the point: *“And you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this, but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven...”* (verses 22,23, RSV). Daniel further indicted him, charging him with worshiping idols instead of *“the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways”* (NKJV). *“You have not glorified Him!”*

Thus, the interpretation of “mene, mene, tekel, upharsin” — (paraphrasing) *“First, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and is bringing it to an end. Secondly, you have been weighed ‘in the balances’ (or ‘on the scales’), and you are found wanting. Therefore, your kingdom will be divided and given to the Medes and Persians.”* That very night, Belshazzar was slain, and Darius, the Mede, took over the kingdom.

What lessons can we learn from this?

1. We can learn to never, never lift up our hearts with pride against God. *“Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall”* (Proverbs 16:18). *“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God”* (1 Peter 5:6). We should certainly know this!!!
2. We should learn to never worship or glorify any but the true and living God! (See Deuteronomy 5:7-9; 6:5,6, 14,15; Luke 4:8; etc.)
3. We learn that there will indeed be for each of us a “weighing” on the scales of God’s righteousness and justice. (Consider Acts 17:31; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:12; Revelation 20:12; 22:12). Let us make every effort **now** to not be *“found wanting”* **then!** †

Maxie B. Boren is a Gospel preacher living in Fort Worth, Texas, USA.

TEXTUAL STUDIES

Paul's Negative Teaching in Ephesians

Albert Gardner

The first three chapters of Ephesians are doctrinal in nature. The last three chapters are concerned with practical Christian duties. Though much of Paul's teaching is positive, he deals with a lot of "thou shalt not" teaching. In fact, one implies the other. If one is told to work and make a living, it is implied that he is not to steal. When he is told "do not steal", it means he is to work and make a living. Those who resent and reject any form of negative teaching have been influenced more by Peale than by Paul. It is interesting to hear people say "DON'T" do negative teaching, but Paul did:

1. Don't be children, tossed to and fro (4:14).
2. Don't walk as other Gentiles, in the vanity of their minds (4:17).
3. Don't lie (4:25).
4. Don't sin in anger (4:26).
5. Don't give place to the devil (4:27).
6. Don't steal (4:28).
7. Don't let corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth (4:29).
8. Don't grieve the Holy Spirit (4:30).
9. Don't be bitter, angry, speak evil, or be malicious (4:31).
10. Don't be a fornicator, unclean, or covetous (5:3).
11. Don't be filthy, talk foolishly, or jest (5:4).
12. Don't partake with the evil (5:7).
13. Don't have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (5:11).
14. Don't be unwise (4:17).
15. Don't get drunk (5:18).
16. Don't be men-pleasing servants (6:6).



Albert Gardner is a preacher of the Gospel and lives in Kennett, Missouri, USA.

From Wise to Foolish

Bonnie Rushmore

Solomon, the second son of David and Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12), was the wisest man to live upon the earth (1 Kings 3:12). After he was ordained as the third king of Israel, God appeared to Solomon in a dream, saying, “*What shall I give you?*” Solomon requested of God, “*...an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?*” (1 Kings 3:4-9). God was pleased with his request and readily granted it and more (1 Kings 3:12-14). However, the duration of some of the promises God made to Solomon were contingent upon remaining faithful to God.

Solomon soon put into practice the wisdom God bestowed upon him when two women came needing a judge to decide who was the mother of an infant. Two women, living in the same house, each gave birth to a son three days apart. While they slept, one child died in the night. The mother of the dead son switched her dead infant with the living son of the other woman. Upon examining the two infants in the morning light, the mother of the living son knew without a doubt the babies had been switched while she slept. The two women came to Solomon to decide the fate of the living child. The King instructed that the living child be cut in two, giving each mother half a child. One mother cried out, “*O my lord, give her the living child, and by no means kill him!*” while the other woman exclaimed, “*Let him be neither mine nor yours, but divide him.*” Wise King Solomon immediately knew to whom the living baby belonged and ordered the child be given to the one who wanted no harm to come to the child. He knew a mother’s love would protect the child at all cost (1 Kings 3:16-28).

King David desired to build a house for God. However, the Lord refused to allow David to build such a place since he had shed much blood — being a man of war. God instructed David that his son Solomon would build the Temple — a permanent place to worship Jehovah. King David prepared the

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plans and some of the building materials, and four years after King Solomon began to reign, he started the construction of the house of worship (1 Kings 6:1; 5:5; 2 Chronicles 22:6-16). Finally, seven years later, the workers completed the Temple, and God's permanent place of worship was ready for the people (1 Kings 6:38).

King Solomon also built himself a house, taking thirteen years to finish. His palace was a little more than three times larger than the house built for God, and it took almost twice as long for the completion of it compared to the Temple (1 Kings 7:1-2; 6:2). Perhaps, this is an indication of God beginning to lose His proper place in Solomon's heart.

The wisdom of King Solomon soon became famous throughout the known world. On one occasion, the Queen of Sheba travelled approximately 1,000 miles to test his wisdom (1 Kings 10:1). She brought a great caravan of camels bearing gifts of spices, gold and precious stones (1 Kings 10:2). Solomon answered all her questions, showed her the Temple, palace and his great wealth. At the end of her visit, the Queen of Sheba stated, *"It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. However I did not believe the words until I came and saw with my own eyes; and indeed the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame of which I heard"* (1 Kings 10:6,7). Many others also came to visit Solomon to hear his wisdom, each bringing gifts of *"...silver and gold, garments, armor, spices, horses, and mules, at a set rate year by year"* (1 Kings 10:25).

Then began Solomon's downward trend toward foolishness. *"But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites – from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, 'You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.' Solomon clung to these in love"* (1 Kings 11:1-2). The King amassed seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines while serving as the leader of God's chosen people, the Israelite nation – most if not all from the foreign nations from which the Israelites had been forbidden to marry (Exodus 34:16,17). Just as God predicted, as Solomon grew older, his heart turned from the One True God to the false gods of his wives. He built places of pseudo worship to the false gods of his wives and burned incense therein (1 Kings 11:4-8). Wise King Solomon failed to follow and serve God as his father King David had.

On two occasions, God promised Solomon **IF** he remained faithful, God would bless him, and a descendant of David would continually rule the Isra-

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elites. Even with great wisdom, King Solomon failed to keep the agreement with God. He allowed his wives to turn his heart from God. The Lord kept His end of the agreement and set in motion His plan for the Israelite nation. Because of God's promise to King David, God agreed to let Solomon remain as king for the remainder of his life. Upon Solomon's death, the united nation of Israel divided into two nations with Solomon's son Rehoboam serving as king of two tribes (Judah and Benjamin), known as Judah, and Jeroboam served as king of the ten northern tribes, called Israel (1 Kings 11:9-13; 26-40; 12:1-24). Solomon reigned for forty years, and he was buried in the city of Jerusalem.

Solomon began his reign as king as a humble, obedient servant of God. Eventually, his heart turned from serving God wholeheartedly to worshipping idols with his many wives. Solomon had the greatest wisdom of any mortal to walk upon the earth, yet he allowed his wives to pull his allegiance away from the one true God. *Fausset's Bible Dictionary* makes the following summary of King Solomon's life:

Solomon probably repented in the end; for Chronicles make no mention of his fall. Again ECCLESIASTES (which see) is probably the result of his melancholy, but penitent, retrospect of the past; "all is vanity and vexation of spirit": it is not vanity, but wisdom as well as our whole duty, to "fear God and keep His commandments." God having made him His Jedidiah (beloved of Jehovah) "visited his transgression with the rod, nevertheless His lovingkindness He did not utterly take from him" (Ps 89:30-36). As the Song of Solomon represents his first love to Jehovah in youth, so Proverbs his matured experience in middle age, Ecclesiastes the sad retrospect of old age. "Solomon in all his glory" was not arrayed as one of the "lilies of the field": a reproof of our pride (Matt 6:29).

Let us not reach the end of our lives as wise King Solomon ended his. Study the Scriptures (2 Timothy 2:15) and make course corrections to comply with God's will so that at the Judgment Day, we will hear "...enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matthew 25:21,23). †

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Bonnie Rushmore works in the World Evangelism office in Winona, Mississippi, USA.

A Man Whose Faith Pleased God

T. Pierce Brown

In Matthew 8:5-10 and Luke 7:1-9, we have an appealing and interesting story of a centurion who had great faith. We think the story is worthy of intense consideration. First, we may consider the kind of man he was. Second, the kind of faith he had. Third, the result of that kind of faith.

First, he was a Gentile — a heathen, from a Jewish standpoint. Second, he was a Roman. That is, one who might be expected to be proud, haughty, hateful, unmerciful, and domineering. Third, he was a centurion in the Roman army. This would only add depth to the above negative qualities we have mentioned that we might have expected in such a man. There is an important lesson to be learned here before we even consider him as an example of faith that Christ praised.

The lesson is that it is a common practice for most of us to categorize people and assume that all those in a certain category are alike. Whether it is women drivers, politicians, law

officers, sailors, sinners, or some particular religious or ethnic group, it is normal for us to act as if they can be judged by the group in which we have listed them. The truth is, every person is an individual, and should be evaluated in terms of his own individual character and actions, not by some label he may wear.

In this case, though he might be expected to be hateful, Luke 7:5 says, *“He loveth our nation.”* Though he might be expected to be irreligious, it says, *“He hath built us a synagogue.”* Though he might be expected to be domineering, arrogant and haughty, he said, *“Lord, trouble not thyself, for I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof”* (Luke 7:6). He might be expected to be unmerciful, yet his servant *“was dear to him”*, and he earnestly cared for his welfare.

So, we see that the man himself was a very unusual man. He reminds us of another centurion in Acts 10. How or why he developed all these

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good and positive characteristics, we do not know. However, in that fact, there is another powerful lesson. God has honest, sincere souls in all sorts of adverse circumstances, as he told Paul in Acts 18:10, *“I have much people in this city”*, though it was filled with idolatry and ungodliness of every kind.

Second, let us notice some things about his faith that are worthy of consideration and emulation. First, the fact that he asked Jesus to come and heal his servant shows that he had some kind of faith in Jesus as one who had power to heal, and who had the kind of compassion that would cause Him to do so. We do not presume that the centurion understood that Jesus was the promised Messiah, or that He was Deity. We also can get a lesson here. Whatever the degree of your faith, if you believe the truth about Christ as far as you have learned the truths revealed, and act upon it, not only will your faith be rewarded, it will be enlightened and will grow, for you will learn more truth.

For example, if you read about Christ and are convinced that He was a good, honest man, your faith is not good enough to save you, though it is true that He was a good, honest man. However, if you really believe that and act upon it, you will soon learn that He claimed to be the Son of God. If He is a good, honest man, He would not be a

lying, deceitful one. So your faith will grow and be rewarded, for you will then act upon the truth that He is the Son of God, with all authority in heaven and on earth. Then, as you submit to that authority, you will find salvation and all the blessings associated with it.

So the results of that kind of faith are far-reaching and important. The importance of even the smallest faith acted upon is suggested by Jesus when He said in Luke 17:6, *“If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea, and it should obey you.”* In our judgment, He is not so much emphasizing what a small faith can do, for they had a small faith. He is emphasizing what a small faith can do when it is acted upon. The lesson is: Use what little faith you have, and you will get more. †

T. Pierce Brown (1923-2008) lived and preached in Cookeville, Tennessee, USA.



**The lesson is: Use
what little faith
you have, and you
will get more.**

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PRISCILLA AND AQUILA AND APOLLOS

Harvey Porter

We first meet Priscilla and Aquila in Acts, chapter 18. They arrived at Corinth about the time Paul did. They had been run out of Rome with other Jews, “because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome” (Acts 18:2). It is believed by historians that Christians were expelled from Rome also because of the close ties between Judaism and Christianity. Aquila was a Jew, and whether Jew or Christian, he suffered persecution for his belief.

When Paul left Corinth, Priscilla and Aquila left with him. They landed at Ephesus, where Priscilla and Aquila stayed, while Paul sailed on for Syria. It was here at Ephesus

that they met Apollos, who also was a Jew and a native of Alexandria, Egypt. Luke described him as “a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures” (Acts 18:24).

Apollos had a lot going for him. He was “a learned man” and knew the Old Testament Scriptures well. The Greek word for “learned” can mean well educated or eloquent, being able to speak well.

Luke continued in his description of Apollos by saying, “He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, knowing only the baptism of John” (Acts 18:25). However, when he spoke in the

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synagogue concerning the Christian way, the tent makers, Priscilla and Aquila, detected that he did not know the whole truth about Christian baptism. This was indicated by Luke when he wrote that Apollos knew “*only the baptism of John*”.

Well, after all, did it really matter? Many good people today have all kinds of beliefs concerning baptism. Some baptize babies, and some say you should not baptize anyone who does not have faith. Some say baptism is necessary for salvation, others say it is not.

Should anyone correct this sincere man on this one point? Most would think a long time before approaching him, since he was a learned man. Alexandria had the finest university in the Roman Empire at this time. It was a center for Jewish learning as well. Apollos also had a thorough knowledge of the Old Testament. What a combination! He possessed secular learning as well as knowledge of sacred writings. Any church today would have hired him. He must have known a lot about Christianity, having been instructed in the way of the Lord. He thought he knew all he needed to know since he was giving his life to preaching Christ. The text says, “*He spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately*”. We all would have loved to have heard him preach. At

Corinth, we learn what a powerful and effective preacher he really was. There was only one area in which he seemed deficient – baptism.

What would we have done? Should anyone say anything to a good man like this who had so much talent and sincerity?

A couple of tent makers thought they should help this eloquent man. They did not correct him publicly, but “*they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately* [accurately]” (verse 26). John’s baptism was valid in its time. It prepared the way for Jesus, but when the kingdom began on Pentecost (Acts 2), baptism was administered to believers “*for the remission of sins*”, by the authority of God through His Son and our Savior, Jesus. It was “*in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit*” (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:38).

Priscilla and Aquila were right; it was important. Baptism was an act of faith that put one into the kingdom, into Christ, into the body, the church. It washed away sins. One joined Jesus in a death, burial, and resurrection.

Apollos needed to know. He evidently took this correction well. He wanted to know the “*way of God more adequately*.” Do we today? †

Before his death in 1998, Harvey Porter had preached for many years in Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA.

Who Am I ?

Rebecca Rushmore

Can you identify me? Read each clue and think carefully. If you guess my name after the first clue, give yourself a score of 100 points. If you know who I am only after the fifth clue, your score is 60, etc. When you are sure of my identity, look up the passages of Scripture following each clue to verify the facts from God's Word.

1. I lived in Israel in a time of great poverty (Judges 6:6).
2. My father's name was Joash (Judges 6:11).
3. My people had to hide from the Midianites (Judges 6:2-6).
4. I watched an angel of the Lord touch a rock and fire came from the rock, which burned up an offering of flesh and unleavened cakes (Judges 6:20-21).
5. During the night, I tore down an altar to Baal, cut down the grove near it, and built an altar to God (Judges 6:25-27).
6. I was called Jerubbaal because I tore down the altar to Baal (Judges 6:32; 7:1).
7. I asked God to give me a sign using the dew of the ground and a fleece (Judges 6:36-40).
8. God said my army was too large (Judges 7:2).
9. The men who were afraid and those who put their faces in the stream to drink were sent home (Judges 7:3-7).
10. My army of 300 defeated the Midianites (Judges 7:16-8:22).



See answer on inside back cover

My Score: _____

Can a Good God Punish?

John Gipson

It seems that in today's world, God cannot destroy the wicked. It is His role to love and forgive, not punish. To speak of the wrath of God is jarring and disconcerting to our sensibilities. We will not have it. Talk of His love; talk of His mercy; talk of His goodness; talk of His kindness; but seal your lips when it comes to His wrath and vengeance.

The Bible, however, is not as squeamish as we are about the character of God. *"The LORD is a*

jealous God and avenging, the LORD is avenging and

Not only can He, but He must!

wrathful; the LORD takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for His enemies" (Nahum 1:2). Nor is this picture limited to Old Testament passages. John the Baptist spoke of *"the wrath to come"*, and Jesus said, *"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life. But the wrath of God rests upon him"* (John 3:36). The apostle Paul said, *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth"* (Romans 1:18). Furthermore, when Jesus comes again, He will do so in flaming fire, *"inflicting vengeance"* upon certain ones (2 Thessalonians 1:7). Men will be calling to the mountains and rocks, *"Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb"* (Revelation 6:16).

The picture is consistent and clear: God is avenging and wrathful. How could He be otherwise and still be good? Shall He tolerate the wicked constantly afflicting the righteous? Shall every form of evil imaginable go unpunished? We would be outraged if our justice system never punished any murderer, rapist, or child-molester, yet we have a problem with *"Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord"* (Romans 12:19). Ridiculous!

Can a good God punish? Not only **can** He, but He **must!**

†

John Gipson works with the Windsong Church of Christ in Little Rock, Arkansas, USA.

BIBLE QUESTIONS

Questions on Baptism



Keith Parker

1. Is there more than one baptism for man in God's plan of redemption? NO. Some say that it makes no difference whether one is sprinkled or immersed. Others say that one must experience both water baptism and Holy Spirit baptism. However, Scripture says, "*There is...one baptism*" (Ephesians 4:5).

2. Does the "water" of baptism wash away sins? NO. There is nothing powerful enough in H₂O to cleanse sins. Indeed, a sinner must be baptized in water in order to wash away sins (Acts 22:16), but by the precious blood

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of Christ his sins are washed away (Revelation 1:5). When one is baptized in water, he is baptized into the death of our Lord (Romans 6:3). Because Christ died and shed His blood (John 9:34), man can be justified (Romans 5:9). “What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.”

3. Is the validity of one’s baptism dependent on what formula the preacher uses while baptizing? NO. Recently we talked to a denominational preacher who said that before one is baptized the preacher had to say, “I baptize you in the name of Jesus.” We must be baptized (as well as repent) in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38), but this simply means that we should do it in light of, and in harmony with, His divine will. Acts 2:38 tells us what to *do*, not what to *say*. Whatever we do or say, all should be done by the approval or authority of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20; Colossians 3:17).

4. Does baptism sanctify sinful relationships? NO. When the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he said that they were washed, sanctified, and justified, but to reach that state, they had to give up sinful practices (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). What good would baptism have done if the Corinthians had stayed in their sinful relationships? You see, before one is baptized, he must *repent of all known sins* (Acts 2:38). Repentance is a change of heart that leads to a change of life (Matthew 21:28,29). If one is living in adultery (and it is possible to *live* in adultery, cf. Colossians 3:5-7) before baptism, the act of baptism does not make that sinful relationship right. Baptism washes away sins, but does not sanctify intrinsic evil relationships.

5. Should one wait to be baptized until he knows everything in the Bible? NO. If that were the case, nobody would ever obey. When the believers of the first century knew what to do to be saved, they obeyed immediately (Acts 2:41; 16:34). They did not wait until one Sunday of the month or until the end of the revival. This, within itself, shows that baptism is a part of God’s plan of salvation for man. †

“And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

Keith Parker works with the Hendersonville Church of Christ in Hendersonville, Tennessee, USA.

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Martha Noland

HARMONY of the brethren. God expects us all to get along well with one another. We are to be one as God and Christ are one (John 17:20-23).

ADORATION for God — it is reverence. We are to revere God by putting Him first in our lives (Matthew 6:33).

PRAY to God for friends, family, self, for the sick (spiritually and physically), the leaders of our country, and many other things. The trouble with prayer is it is easy to talk about, but it is not easy to do. We say we will pray for these things, but we don't take time to pray as we should (1 Thessalonians 5:17; Colossians 4:2; 1 Timothy 2:8).

PRAISE GOD from whom all blessings flow. One of the great side effects of praise is that we begin to realize the precious nature of our relationship to God (Hebrews 13:15; 1 Peter 4:11).

YIELD not to temptation, for yielding is sin. One of our sins is stubbornness. Let us turn to God for help, and He will enable us to overcome anything. God promised us a way of escape, if we look for and accept His help (1 Corinthians 10:13).

CHARTS AND OUTLINES

NOT TO FORSAKE THE ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH. All services and Bible studies are important to worship and to praise God, not just Sunday morning. We need the midweek service for spiritual food and growth (Hebrews 10:25,26).

EVANGELISM - The Great Commission says, “*Go into all the world and preach the gospel.*” This includes our own community. We should be trying to invite our friends and neighbors (Matthew 28:19,20).

WORSHIP — God in spirit and in truth. We need to try as hard as we can to stay focused on what is being taught or said during our worship service to God. Try not to let what is going on around us to distract us, no matter how cute the little ones are (John 4:24).

YESTERDAY is gone — we need to put it behind us — press on to the future and start afresh. Do not worry about the past or future, but work for today. This is all that God has promised (Matthew 6:34).

EAGERNESS to serve. Let us all find jobs to do and do them well, for the Lord. There is a work we all can do. No work is too small. We need to use our talents the Lord has given us (Matthew 25:14-30).

ASSOCIATION is another word for fellowship. Fellowship can be worshipping, working, playing, eating, or just spending time with one another. It is certainly up there with teaching, the Lord’s Supper, and prayer (Acts 2:42).

READ and study God’s Word daily. This will help us to grow into the kind of Christians God wants (2 Timothy 2:15). †

Martha Noland, daughter of and sister to Gospel preachers, is the wife of a Gospel preacher, too. She and her husband, Robert Noland, reside in Hanoverton, Ohio, USA, where they labor with the local congregation there.

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

Zephaniah 3:17

**The LORD your God,
in your midst, The
Mighty One, will save;
He will rejoice over you
with gladness, He will
quiet you with His love,
He will rejoice over you
with singing.**

What a declaration! “The Lord your God”. He is our Lord and our God — the Power behind all of creation — yet He proclaims Himself to be “in our midst” — not in some far off exalted place, but here in our very midst.

Who is this God? He is “the Mighty One”, and He speaks to us with promises: He will **save** us — from what? from whatever threatens His children, for we are His treasured possessions.

He will comfort and console us with His love. And — wonder of wonders! He even breaks out in songs of happiness because of the joy we bring to Him! Can you imagine the God of the Universe singing in happiness because of YOU?

What ad-
mission does our God make?

That we fallen humans mean so much to Him that we can affect Him! He says that our behavior can cause Him to rejoice over us with gladness! Can you imagine that the powerful God of the entire universe takes note of ME, His child, and that I can cause Him to be glad in His heart so that He is filled with joy? It is a marvelous thing that humans are actually made in His image — that we feel the range of emotions ascribed to God in His Word. The joy we feel is human-sized compared to His great joy over us. Do we also cause Him pain?

Archaeology and the Bible

Rebecca Rushmore

I believe in the spade. It has fed the tribes of mankind. It has furnished them water, coal, iron, and gold. And now it is giving them truth — historic truth, the mines of which have never been opened till our time. (Blaiklock ix.)

This view of archaeology was given by Oliver Wendell Holmes. The subject of archaeology is a relatively new field of study. This term has been defined by Blaiklock as “that branch of historical research which draws its evidence from surviving material traces and remains of past human activity” (Blaiklock v). More specifically, Bible archaeology studies things as they relate to the Scriptures and the times in which the Bible was written (Vos 9).

In a broad sense, Bible archaeology has been around for only one hundred fifty years (Unger, *New* 18). Clyde Woods said, “Although archeology [sic] was more or less a treasure hunt when it began, it may now be classified as a science because of its strict methods” (Woods 4). In the last fifty years, archaeology has con-

tinually brought forth new contributions to the study of ancient times and has gradually grown in significance (Unger, *New* 18.)

The purpose of this article is to show, through archaeology, that the Bible is historically accurate. Proof of its accurateness will lend credence to the claim that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. To establish the claim of historical accuracy, the fall of Jericho (from the Old Testament) will be discussed.

With the exception of the Bible, there are no literary works describing the time covered by the Old Testament. Until excavations began in the Bible lands, many did not believe all of the events described in those pages. In the last half century, there has been much work done to excavate these areas. Scholars are now faced with proof that the Bible is accurate (Unger, *Old* 10).

One such situation involves the city of Jericho as described in Joshua 3-6. Excavations have shown that this is probably the oldest city in Palestine. (Vos 86) Three major works have been completed at this site. The

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first was overseen by the German Oriental Society from 1907 through 1909. The conclusion of this study was that a walled city did not exist at the time Joshua arrived in Canaan (Vos 86; Wood, "Israelites" 47). In 1930, a man named John Garstang began another excavation at the site. His work used updated methods of dating (pottery chronology) and other advances in the field. Garstang found a double wall fortification, much pottery, food, and great evidence of a conquered and torched city (Wood, "Israelites" 49; Vos 87). He used this evidence to date the destruction of Jericho by Joshua at 1400 B.C., a date that raised much controversy (Free 131).

The controversy arose because many scholars did not want to assign such an early date to the Israelites in Canaan. Garstang defended his date of conquest. He attributed the opinions of scoffers to lack of firsthand information and a preconceived idea of the date that the Israelites left Egypt. Garstang claimed that his evidence would not have been called in question if scholars had not already decided when the exodus and conquest occurred (Free 132.)

A third excavation was begun in 1952 by Kathleen Kenyon. Her work lasted until 1958 and resulted in the conclusion that Jericho was not a walled city at the time of Joshua. She places the fall of Jericho 150 years before Garstang's date (Wood, "Israelites" 52). However, a detailed report of her work was not published until 1981, several years after her death. Dr. Bryant G. Wood used this publication and one from 1982 and 1983 to reexamine the evidence at Jericho (Wood, "Israelites" 49).

Wood found that Kenyon's work was extremely meticulous and carefully performed. The problem he found was in her analysis. Kenyon based her date of the fall of Jericho mainly on the pottery that was not present at the site instead of the more than 150,000 pieces that were (Wood, "Israelites" 50; Free 132). Her search was mainly in a poorer part of town where the expensive, imported pottery would not be expected (Wood "Israelites" 50).

Kenyon discovered a double wall system, a very significant find not made by Garstang. At the bottom of the mound was a revetment wall. Above it, reaching to the top of the mound, was a plastered rampart on which the poor part of the city was built. Above this was a mud brick wall. Remnants of this wall have been eroded away. However, bricks from it were found at the outside base of the revetment wall. Kenyon concluded that the walls had fallen down and made a ramp for conquerors to climb into the city (Wood, "Israelites" 53, 56).

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The evidence of ceramic pottery, a radiocarbon date of charcoal, the stratigraphy of the site, and Egyptian amulets (scarabs) found nearby all support the date given by Garstang for the conquest of Jericho. In his article on the subject, Wood states, "The correlation between the archaeological evidence and the Biblical narration is substantial" (Wood, "Israelites" 57). Wood's conclusions have been questioned by others such as Piotr Bienkowski, but he has shown the objections to be invalid (Wood, "Bienkowski" 49). There is no reason to believe that Joshua's conquest of Jericho as recorded in the Bible is not true.

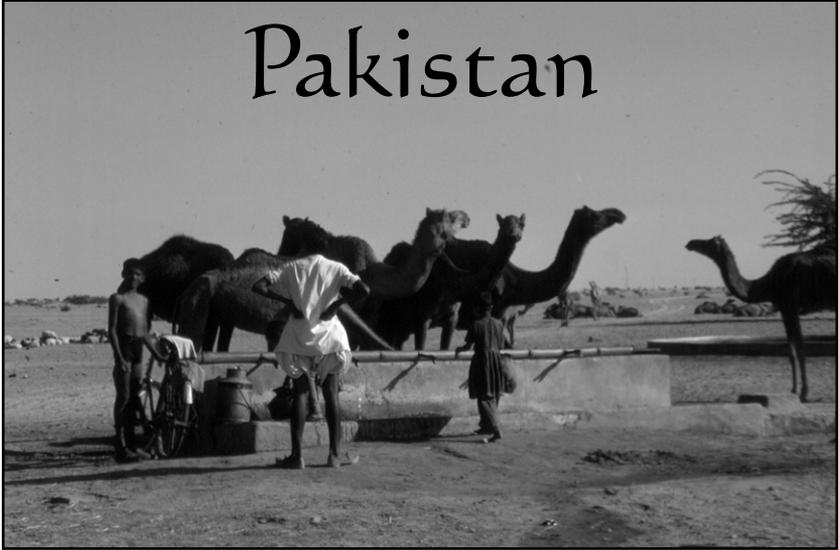
Though long disputed as a fictional account, the evidence proves the city of Jericho fell exactly the way the Bible describes. The science of archaeology continues to lend credence to the biblical accounts of the Old Testament. Those who believe the Bible is God's inspired Word do not need this additional evidence, however, it is useful information to show others the accuracy of the Bible.

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Rebecca Rushmore teaches school in Desoto County, Mississippi and lives in Collierville, Tennessee, USA where she worships and teaches Bible classes at the Collierville Church of Christ. She also makes stateside and foreign (Guyana and Myanmar) mission trips. Sister Rushmore is the author of the book, *What Makes Us Tick? A Look at Personalities and the Bible*, and she is a regular writer for *The Voice of Truth International* and *Gospel Gazette Online* (www.gospelgazette.com).

Pakistan



Betty Burton Choate
Luis Cusi

In 1961, Gordon and Jane Hogan, with their children, settled in the city of Lahore, Pakistan to live and to begin the Lord's church in a country that was 98% Muslim. Radical Islam had not surfaced at that time, so they freely and happily went about the business of meeting people of all walks of life, and of offering them the opportunity to know God.

In February of 1962, J.C. and I, along with our baby daughter, Sheila, moved to Pakistan. We spent three months with the Hogans, to learn all that we could about their methods for outreach, before moving 800 miles to the South to the city of Karachi — our home for the next four years.

During that time, several congregations were established in both cities as well as in surrounding village settings. Gospel meetings were held, literature was printed, Bible correspondence courses offered publicly, and advertising was done to make the church known to people in general. The Hogans eventually moved to Singapore to help fill the vacuum there. We were replaced by other families in Karachi and moved first to Sri Lanka and later to New

FROM THE HEART OF

Delhi, India. No foreign missionary works in Pakistan now, and the full story of the state of the church in the country is not verified. Because of the enmity between Pakistan and India, J.C. returned to Pakistan only two or three times after our move, concerned that the stamps in his passport showing visits to Pakistan could result in being blacklisted in India. We did not want that to happen, so we left the affairs of the Pakistani church to those who could deal with them more directly than we felt we could do.

One of the local men who preached in Karachi died at a young age of a heart attack. Another moved to his ancestral home in India. Some migrated to the States and to Canada. One of the (spiritually) stronger sisters died, after sending her daughter to the States for an education. The daughter, Aseema Songstad, married a Christian and continues as a faithful part of the Lord's body in St. Louis, MO. I have had some contact with the son of the deceased preacher, but since no one has visited the churches in Karachi in many years, his doctrinal faithfulness and that of the seven congregations he says still exist in Karachi is not verified.

In Lahore, Asghar Ali was converted early in the Hogans' stay. A Muslim by background, Asghar faced ostracism by his family, but he has remained a



Asghar and Rahat Ali, with their "Five Dils" ("Dil" in Urdu means "of the heart", and Dil is the first part of the name of each daughter.) Dilnawaz (one of the "Dils") has helped much with the relief work. This picture was made long ago; all are married now, with families.

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faithful leader and preacher through these years. His wife and five daughters and their families make up a part of the congregation which meets in Lahore.

There are other works that have been developed. I am not familiar with the details, so I won't presume to talk about them. However, when the extreme flooding took place last October, brother Luis Cusi and other members of their "MARCH" team in the Philippines determined to help. Luis ("Chito") wrote those of us who had collected funds for the tropical storm in the spring in the Philippines, asking if money could be supplied for those who had been devastated by the flooding. Reports said that funds provided by concerned nations and secular entities were being manipulated by the Muslim leadership, withheld from believers in Christ unless they converted to Islam. Members of the Lord's church in the US again opened their hearts to make it possible for aid to be given to the suffering. The following report was made by brother Cusi:

HOW WAS YOUR TRIP TO PAKISTAN?

by Chito Cusi

Last Oct. 5, our MARCH for Christ Pakistan Flood Relief team of 3, left for Lahore. It was my first trip to Pakistan, while for Dr. Gerry Teves and physio-therapist Shem Sameon it was their second after having been part of the 6 person MARCH medical team that helped in the relief efforts in earthquake stricken Balakot City (northern Pakistan) in October, 2005.

WAR-NINGS!!!

Earlier we had received warnings that the situation in Pakistan was very much different from 5 years ago. Bombings, political unrest, poverty, the war, the Taliban, Al Qaeda, and the growing tension at the Khyber Pass (the only route from the sea for NATO forces into Afghanistan) all contributed to the volatility of the times. A good friend even went to the extent of remarking, "If you get back from Pakistan alive, I will shave off my hair!" He had reason to warn me — it was all over the news! A US drone attack had just killed Pakistani soldiers in the border and Pakistan retaliated by closing the Khyber Pass, cutting off supply lines to NATO forces fighting Al Qaeda in Afghanistan! The preacher with whom we were going to work had given us a news flash that three flood relief workers' bodies had been recently found in a shallow grave — was he scaring us or what? Did he even want us to go there?

When I am asked, "How was Pakistan?" the first word that comes to mind is Enigma; however, unsure of its real meaning I say "difficult". Tonight I finally put a finger on it, and this is what Merriam-Webster says: "1. an

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obscure speech or writing, 2. something hard to understand or explain, or, 3. an inscrutable or mysterious person.”

In the context of a nation, the Free Online Dictionary uses ENIGMA in a sentence in this manner: This country remains an enigma for the outside world.

SO HOW WAS OUR TRIP TO PAKISTAN? Let me tell you why Enigma is the first word that comes to mind. It is like a scene right out from the movies, and you are the man in the camera’s lenses. Donkey carts and bicycles alongside motorized rickshaws, motorcycles, and cars screaming through the streets, tooting their horns endlessly — you see this scene in the side streets, markets, in the highways and expressways. Men wearing their traditional white, cream or light blue chemise, bearded, wearing caps; women in different styles of clothing with veils covering their heads, some showing just their eyes, all walking casually in the streets. And as soon as they see you, their eyes all rivet on you. Imagine yourself in these surroundings. In the days that we were there, we did not see any tourists, no Caucasians at all in our sight until we were inside the airport on our way home.

RAISON D’ETRE

Relief work has always been the *raison d’etre* of MARCH for Christ — Medical Action for Relief, Counseling and Healing — work done all in the name of Christ, to the glory of Christ. A massive earthquake in the city of Baguio in the northern Philippines in 1990 gave rise to this banding together of about 20 Christian doctors, dentists, nurses, preachers and plain members. Their desire was to point people in the direction of God in times of disaster and to discover God’s love in spite of calamity. Since 1990, by God’s grace, this MARCH for Christ has conducted 54 missions throughout the Philippine islands, and in tragedy-stricken countries in Asia (Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Cambodia — our first peace time mission), always working with the churches of Christ. In some areas, we help churches grow their contacts through our benevolent work, and in others we helped plant new churches, even as far as Myanmar. So was a strife-ridden Pakistan going to scare us from helping Christians who were not only victims of the flooding caused by the melting of the Himalayan snow, but were being pressured to convert to Islam in exchange for relief goods?

“MARCH people run towards tragedy and do not run away from it!” quotes Ed Poblete — co-founder of MARCH. Trusting in God’s mission for

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us in Pakistan, we set out for that country. Like Gideon and his 300 soldiers, the 3 of us went to this land known as the cradle of Islamic fundamentalism, and asked God to multiply our resources and to open doors for us. We imagined we were the 3 columns that God used to defeat the Midianites.

Did God answer our prayers and multiply our resources? You be the judge.

We arrived 10:30 PM, Oct. 5, in Lahore, got into our hotel at midnight. At 8:30 AM the Philippine Consul picked us up to bring us to a meeting and press conference at the Lahore General Hospital. The hospital's bigwigs, led by Dr. Salahuddin Khan, Consul Rizwan Fareed, and others, presented the MARCH



for Christ relief team on nationwide television. And in a short time we were in an ambulance headed for the city of Muza Fargargh — almost a 7 hour drive. While we were in Muzaffargargh till Saturday, October 9, Dr. Gerry Teves teamed up with LGH Dr. Mohammed Andnan Bhutta, a very likeable man who spoke English and Spanish. Together they treated over a thousand patients in 5 different villages close to the area hit by the floods and where refugees had relocated. Shem and I teamed up with Naeem Sabir, preacher for Sahiwal Church of Christ, to organize relief goods and then distribute them to 132 Christian families from that area.

From Muzaffargargh, we backtracked three and a half hours to Sahiwal City, where we stayed and worked with the church until departure time. Dr. Teves teamed up with husband and wife, Drs. Aftab & Sabia, to have medical camps, treating brethren and their Muslim neighbors from Sunday afternoon up to Monday afternoon. On Tuesday, Dr. Teves had a solo medical camp with Shem & Naeem in a village in Okarra city. Christian flood refugees traveled

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from 40 kilometers away to be treated and receive relief goods that we had prepared. In all, we gave away 460 packages of flour, rice, cooking oil, dal, sugar, tea, bath soap and laundry soap — 2 sack loads per family.

BACKGROUND

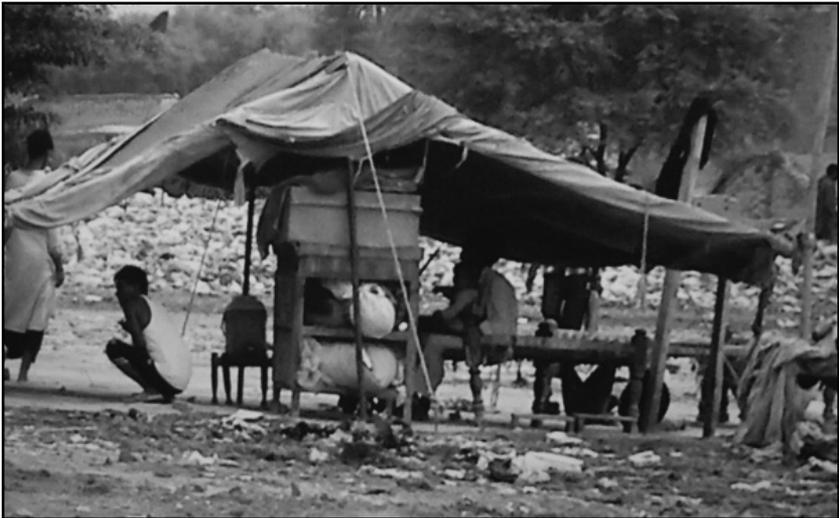
When we left for Pakistan, our primary objective was to bring initial relief to Christians suffering from the effects of the devastating floods that



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***Above: Ravaged and demolished huts left after the flooding.
Below: Shelter set up for flood victims.***



left almost 2 million homeless and affected nearly 20 million people. *Initial relief*, because we know that whatever we accomplished in this survey trip was to pave the way for a better understanding of the situation of the churches of Christ in Pakistan and that we would only be seeing the “tip of the iceberg”.

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In 2005 when we responded to the earthquake in Balakot City, northern Pakistan, we were able to connect only with a small congregation of the church of Christ meeting in the house of Ashgar Ali. He was introduced to us by Gordon Hogan as one he had baptized and as one in whom he had complete trust. Other than this house church, we were not made aware of any other brethren in Pakistan.

As we made preparations for this 2010 mission, we were able to connect with Naeem Sabir of the Sahiwal Church of Christ. We came across him since he is a fellow alumnus of some of our Filipino members who had studied at the British Bible School. Upon making further background checks, we were able to get an endorsement as to his reliability by John Myer, pulpit minister of the Church of Christ at Little Mountain (Huntsville, Alabama), who had earlier visited Sahiwal in August, 2010. We were surprised that brother Sabir claimed in his letter that there were 7000 Christians across Pakistan, and that there were several congregations in Lahore, Sahiwal and other major cities in the country. This was something we wanted to verify.

Thus, with funds raised, and contacts established, we set out for Pakistan with the following objectives, namely:

1. To connect with Naeem Sabir and the Christians he claimed existed in Pakistan, and;
2. To distribute relief goods and provide medical treatments to Christians affected by the floods; and,
3. To work with a medical group to which the Philippine Consul in Lahore would attach our two-man medical staff. Initially, we thought this was the Philippine National Red Cross; turned out to be the Lahore General Hospital.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

MEDICAL SERVICES AND RELIEF GOODS:

1. **MUZAFFARGARGH** (Population est. 3 million) — Dr. Gerry Teves teamed up with the Lahore General Hospital's Dr. Mohammed Andnan Bhutta to treat almost 2000 flood victims in the villages within one to two hours from the city of Muzaffarghar. Daily, the two would go out early to travel to poor villages.
 - a. Distributed 135 packs of flour, rice, cooking oil, dal, pickles, sugar, tea, bath soap and laundry soap to brethren
 - b. Gave funds for the purchase and the start of a sewing livelihood center through Rubina. She will develop her sewing business and at the same time provide training to other women interested in developing the craft.

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2. **SAHIWAL** (Population est. 3 million) — Dr. Gerry Teves also teamed up with 2 doctors from the Sahiwal Church of Christ, namely Dr. Sabia (sister of Naeem) and Dr. Zafar Aftab (his brother-in-law) to conduct medical camps (free clinics) on Sunday afternoon and the whole day of Monday. Here they treated brethren and Muslims, more than 300 patients.

a. 90 packs of flour, rice, cooking oil, dal, sugar, tea, bath soap and laundry soap. All deposited for storage and distribution at church building.

b. Donated a bicycle wheelchair to a paraplegic brother. The wheelchair was not in stock and was available only for delivery on the day we were leaving.

c. Provided minimal assistance (10,000 rupees) to a brother for the tuition fee of his 4 children who are doing very well with their grades.

3. **OKARA** — On Tuesday, Oct. 13, Dr. Gerry and PT Shem Sameon teamed up with Naeem as interpreter in the village of Bethelhum to treat and give medicine to about 100 more patients.



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a. 80 packs of flour, rice, cooking oil, dal, sugar, tea, bath soap and laundry soap distributed.

MEETING THREE PREACHERS OF THE CHURCH IN LAHORE

We consider meeting Eric and two other preachers a major accomplishment because it paves the way for more cooperation with brethren in Lahore. The house church that Eric leads is in a village called Malacca in the suburbs of Lahore, with over 300 houses. We foresee ourselves returning to work with Eric and the other preachers. Dr. Gerry has proposed an Eye Camp in 2011 in the Lahore Hospital, and a medical camp in Malacca.

Naeem has promised to introduce us to up to 16 preachers working in the Lahore area, and to the preachers working in Peshawar and other faraway cities in Pakistan.

RECOMMENDATIONS/FUTURE PLANS

2010

We were not able to sufficiently prepare the brethren for the tough winter months ahead, but we transferred funds to sister Dilnawaz, so that she can purchase blankets and other warm clothing, for distribution by brothers Naeem and Eric.

2011

In my earlier report, I mentioned that we met 3 preachers from the church of Christ, and they were very excited about our plans to have an Eye Camp and a Medical Camp in 2011. The village of Malacca right in Lahore city has 300 Muslim, Catholic and Anglican families with whom our brave and loyal preachers can share Jesus' love. We can help our own preachers grow in their knowledge of God's word and grace. Working and interacting with them will help grow preachers to maturity.

LESSONS

We would learn when we returned to Sahiwal after our first clinics the reason for the over-protectiveness of Naeem. He would not allow us to go out the gate or to walk in the streets by ourselves. The church compound even had guards with an AK 47 assault rifle and a shotgun. We felt like prisoners at times because we are so used to visiting with people and interacting with them.

A few months earlier (or was it a year ago), two Christian men studying Bible with Naeem were arrested by police while distributing tracts. They were jailed and charged with blaspheming Mohammed. On their way to court, two Muslims shot them at close range. Christians protested their deaths, demon-

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strated and burned tires in the streets. Naeem was one of those who led in filing charges against the killers. As a result, he told us that there were constant death threats against him and the church. During the open medical camps, Muslim ladies, fully clad in their burkas, were frisked by our ladies to make sure they did not carry bombs. There was even one lady who came for treatment — she must have been in her fifties — and it was surprising how people in line would greet her with much affection and honor. We found out that her son had gone off to Afghanistan to fight alongside the Taliban, and such was her prominence in their community.

We were glad no bombs went off while we were in the area, but there were scares for our families. While we were still in Muzaffargarh, a bomb exploded in Karachi, killing and injuring many. A few days later, the Taliban attacked stranded NATO forces in the Khyber Pass, burned 54 oil tanker trucks, and commandeered over 10 truckloads of supplies. And just as we were leaving Sahiwal, a NATO plane crashed, killing 6 Filipinos — far-fetched for us to be in that plane, but still Dr. Gerry got a call from his sister to make sure we were safe.

And yet, we shall return in 2011, as the Lord wills it.

While some of us might be reluctant to go, there are many reasons why we should return. First, this trip was, for us, an eye-opener. We went, not just to bring relief, but also wanting to know more about the churches of Christ in Pakistan and the opportunities to strengthen our brethren's resolve to keep on in such a hostile environment. They are a brave lot, and we need to be there to reinforce this bravery and love for the Lord.

Second, winter will be long and the funds we gave were just enough for food and limited supplies of blankets. We were not even able to reach the brethren in Peshawar or Karachi.

Third, we have received a call from God. Our meeting with preachers in Lahore on our way home was for us God's signal that there is more to be done. Unlike Jonah, we will return to our Nineveh. If Pakistan is the only way from the sea for NATO forces to enter Afghanistan, perhaps Pakistan, as the cradle of Islamic fundamentalism, is the way into the hearts of our Muslim friends and their leaders.

WILL YOU JOIN HANDS WITH US IN HELPING THE HELPLESS?

Luis "Chito" Cusi is a Christian in the Philippines, working with the MARCH for Christ program. The team of volunteer professional and spiritual workers follows in the wake of natural disasters to bring help and hope to the devastated.

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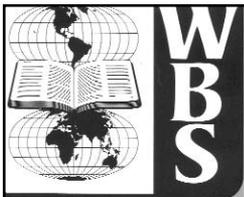
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