



Prelude to the Kingdom

Tom Colburn

As I reviewed and helped to select and prepare the various articles in this issue of THE RESTITUTION HERALD, articles reprinted from as far back as 1911, one thing stood out — everyone spoke as if we were at the very door of the Kingdom. Many of those authors are long deceased, yet Christ tarries.

Were they not spiritually in tune? If that were the case then Paul was equally out of sync as he spoke of Jesus' imminent return. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11, Paul speaks of the coming of the Lord as if he expects himself and those with him to witness it personally. Not even Jesus knew the day and hour of his return so there is nothing wrong with Christians holding an expectant view.

I think it was Ayn Rand who said, "Live as if you expected to live a hundred years but might die tomorrow." Think what you will of

the writer, it's a thought-provoking line. We in the Church of God might alter it a bit to say something like: "Live as if you expected to live forever in the Age to Come, but might die tomorrow from this life."

The message of God as articulated by Jesus was not about death, but about life, forever as a new creature, ultimately on a recreated earth with the Father as our only God and Jesus as our King. And that "new life" starts here on earth.

The signs of the times spoken of so often in those old articles are signs pointing toward the Second Coming of Christ. But we shouldn't focus so much on preparing for the prelude of the second coming (signs of the times) as we should for what comes thereafter — life IN the Kingdom.

"Death comes unexpectedly!" So bellowed Kirk Douglas, portraying a fire and brimstone minister in an old

movie. We don't know the day we'll die. We pray to see Jesus' second coming in our lifetime — and that's fine as we pray the prayer Jesus gave us, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done" — but our lifetime might conclude at noon tomorrow for all we know. So focusing on the Kingdom and less on (seeing) the coming seems a wise thing to do.

So were the authors of the old *Restitution Herald* articles wrong? Was Paul out of sync? No. Jesus' Second Coming will be soon for every one of us one way or another. So let's live as if we expected to have a long career for Christ spreading the Gospel here on earth, but all the while keeping in mind 1 Corinthians 9:27 in which Paul seeks to keep his own life under the control of God so "after I have preached to others, I myself won't be disqualified." ✠

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The Restitution Herald



Volume 92 Number 1

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'Tis the Season: Spreading the Light to the World

Also in this Issue:

We Have a Law
More Than a Manger and a Cross
The Star and the Sign
The Children's Page
Christmas Crossword

Editorial

I love Christmas. I also hate it.

I love Christmas because it is a holiday rich with memories. When I look at old home movies I almost believe that my childhood was an endless cycle of birthdays and Christmases (with a few family reunions in there, too). I associate Christmas with the best of times together with family, special presents, lots of delicious food, parties, and time away from school and work. It's impossible to think of Christmas and not recall rich, sentimental memories.

But I also hate Christmas. The more I know about its origins, the less I like it. It's very unsettling to know that nearly every Christmas tradition and symbol somehow sprang from some pagan Roman or Greek celebration that had nothing to do with the celebration of the birth of God's Messiah. And apparently the date is wrong — there's little evidence to support December 25th as the date of Jesus' birth.

I hate the commercialization of Christmas. Retailers gauge the success of their business year by how well they do during the Christmas shopping season. And how many consumers accumulate a huge debt during the Christmas season that takes the rest of the year to pay off? Is this any way to celebrate the birth of God's Son?

What's a Christian to do? Do we celebrate along with the rest of the world, or do we protest and withdraw from the madness until the holiday is past? It's a dilemma that followers of Christ have pondered for nearly two millennia.

So, are you ready for "the final answer?" Here is mine: I DON'T KNOW. I really wish I had a good cut-and-dry answer, but I don't. I heartily agree with those who point out the underlying pagan origins of this so-called "Christian" holiday, but I also know that the rest of the world is going to celebrate Christmas whether you and I

join them or not. This mega-holiday will go on with or without you and me.

Two families who came from a tradition that was strongly opposed to the celebration of Christmas were once involved in a church that I pastored. As the holiday season approached they wanted to know if the church would be celebrating the Advent season. I informed them that as a church we would celebrate Advent and I gave this defense:

"The world will celebrate Christmas with or without us. We can choose to ignore it and bide our time until it passes, or we can be 'a lonely voice crying in the wilderness,' issuing a call to a Christ-centered celebration. We, as a church, choose to try to refocus this holiday rather than to ignore it."

Perhaps there is room to both love and hate Christmas. Love the fact that it is designed to celebrate the birth of Jesus, and that it offers us a unique opportunity to witness to the truth about the seed of Abraham, the heir to David's throne, but hate the fact that it does spring from pagan origins, and that its observance today is largely anything but Christ-centered.

Perhaps this issue of the Restitution Herald can serve as a tool in reshaping Christmas. Maybe there is an article or two to be found on its pages which will help someone look beyond this commercial holiday to the Christ whose birth we celebrate. Our efforts will be truly worthwhile if we are able to point someone to the King of the coming Kingdom of God.

My challenge to you this season is to be a "lonely voice crying in the wilderness," calling all who will hear to a celebration of the coming of God's Son. May you and I, even in some small way, reshape and refocus this holiday.



Steve Taylor
Director of Communications
Church of God General Conference



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EDITOR
 JEFF FLETCHER

PUBLISHING SPECIALIST
 JUSTIN TAYLOR

PROOFREADER
 SARAH BUZZARD

MAILING AND SUBSCRIPTIONS
 MARCY CLY

ADDRESS EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE TO:
 THE RESTITUTION HERALD, ATTN: JEFF FLETCHER, 130
 WAYNE ST., PONCHATOULA, LA 70454. E-mail:
 happywoodseg@i-55.com

**ADDRESS MAILING AND SUBSCRIPTION
 CORRESPONDENCE TO:**
 THE RESTITUTION HERALD, ATTN: MARCY CLY,
 P. O. BOX 100,000, MORROW, GA 30260 (E-MAIL
 ADDRESS: info@abc-cogcc.org).

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 THE RESTITUTION HERALD ADVOCATES:

- THE ONENESS OF GOD (1 COR. 8:6);
- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S POWER (ACTS 1:8);
- JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT. 16:16),
 AND IS OUR MEDIATOR (1 TIM. 2:5);
- THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16);
- THE MORTALITY OF MAN (JOB 4:17; PSA. 146:3);
- THE NEAR RETURN OF CHRIST (ACTS 1:11), AND LIFE ONLY
 THROUGH HIM (COL. 3:3);
- THE LITERAL RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (JOHN 5:28);
- THE IMMORTALIZATION OF THOSE IN CHRIST (1 COR. 15:53, 54);
- THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (REV. 21:8);
- THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF
 GOD UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32);
- THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND
 ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1,
 3);
- THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN
 BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE
 WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21);
- IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION
 IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS
 (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO
 SALVATION.



More Than a Babe

Carlis Medley

At this time of year the Christian world commemorates the idea of the Christ child. The hymns ring out in churches proclaiming the great event.

Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus, "Born a child and yet a king." Angels We Have Heard on High, "Christ the Lord, the newborn King." The First Noel, "Born is the king of Israel." Hark! The Herald Angels Sing, "Glory to the newborn King."

These are a few of the hymns of the season that proclaim the birth of a king. Most of the people who sing them are unaware of what was centered in the birth of the babe in Bethlehem.

The Apostle Paul says in 2 Timothy 1:9 (all references KJV), "Who [God] hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." This babe in Bethlehem was the focal point of God's redemptive plan before the creation of the world.

At the proper time, God brought Him on the scene. "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Gal. 4:4).

The birth of the Messiah/King was foretold by the prophet Micah in chapter 5, verse 2. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be

ruler in Israel: whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." One would be born in Bethlehem and be king over Israel.

The wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, "saying, where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him" (Matt. 2:2). Their search was not only for a child but also for a king!

What a marvelous announcement the angel Gabriel had for Mary. "And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever: And of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:31-33).

This babe will eventually rule and reign from the throne of David as king. It will be a rule of righteousness, justice, joy and peace. What a tremendous time to look forward to as we struggle in this world of trouble and heartache. Our blessed Jesus will reign!

Let's look at Jesus before Pilate. "Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee

unto me. What hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice" (John 18:33-37). The babe in the manger in Bethlehem was born a king.

Modern theology cares little about the Scriptures that speak of the kingship of Jesus. They read of the babe in the manger and disregard all Scriptures about him except those about his death, burial and resurrection. These are vital, yet do not give the entire picture.

The babe in the manger was *so much more!* Modern theology (and those who seek life in the coming age) would do well to follow the advice Jesus gave in John 5:39: "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, we worship and thank our Heavenly Father for the gift He has given. How marvelous is the love, grace and mercy of God!

More than a babe in a manger is this Jesus who is Prophet, Priest and coming King. Even so, come Lord Jesus! ☩



The Rapture

William M. Wachtel

A term frequently heard in Christian circles today is “the rapture.” When it is mentioned, other terms are often attached to it, such as “pre-tribulational,” “mid-tribulational,” and “post-tribulational.” The present study is not intended to discuss these adjectives and their meaning, but simply to find out what is meant by the term “rapture” itself, in the way that the Bible connects it to Christ’s second coming.

The word “rapture” does not occur in the common versions of the English Bible, but the idea is based on a Greek word found in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, where the Apostle Paul used the word *harpazo*, a verb meaning “to snatch away, to take away, to rob, to steal, to carry off” — actions that imply forcefulness or even violence. The same Greek word is found in Acts 8:39, where we are told that “the Spirit of the Lord *caught away* Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more.” In this account, Philip was suddenly and bodily removed from the presence of the Ethiopian eunuch, whom he had just baptized, and was transported miraculously to another location. He was “snatched up” or “carried off.”

The English word “rapture,” in fact, is based on a Latin word that means “to

seize.” We see this same Latin root in our words “raptor” (a bird that seizes its prey and carries it off) and “rapid,” “rape,” and “rapine.” These all contain the idea of force and even violence.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, the subject is clearly the return of the Lord Jesus and the resurrection of His people at His coming. (The same subject is found in 1 Corinthians 15:22, 23; Philippians 3:20, 21; Hebrews 9:28 and other texts.) Verse 13 reveals Paul’s concern about those believers in Thessalonica who had lost loved ones to the enemy Death (1 Cor. 15:26). He did not want them to grieve hopelessly, as the pagans did. He wanted to show them that there was a promise of future life for those who had died, who were “asleep in Jesus.”

In verse 14 he uses the illustration of Christ’s own example. Christ died and God raised Him again from death (1 Cor. 15:15; Acts 2:24, 32; 17:30, 31; Rom. 10:9). Likewise, says Paul, God will bring forth (from death) those who have fallen asleep in Christ. The verse is speaking of two *parallel* occurrences — Christ’s death and resurrection and His people’s death and resurrection. The “bring” has nothing to do with being “brought from heaven” when Christ descends, as often

misinterpreted, but rather has to do with being brought forth from the dead, as Christ was. Compare 2 Corinthians 4:14, where Paul says we are raised “with” Christ. He is the “firstfruits” of the first resurrection. He and His people are all part of the same resurrection!

Verse 15 mentions the “coming” of the Lord Jesus. The Greek word is *parousia*, the term that is used constantly in the New Testament for the return, the second coming, of Jesus. Paul shows that the resurrection cannot occur until Christ returns. He states that the believers who are still alive at that time do not take precedence over those who have already fallen asleep in Christ. He explains why in the next two verses.

Verse 16 tells us that the first step in Christ’s return is for Him to “descend from heaven.” When this happens, He will no longer be “in” heaven. He will then have *departed* from heaven, as implied in the words “descend from heaven.” But the Apostle Peter declares in Acts 3:19-21 that Christ *must remain* in heaven until the time comes for all things to be restored as the Old Testament prophets have foretold. When Peter says that God will “send” Jesus from heaven, he implies that Christ not only will not



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then be in heaven any longer, but also that it will then be time for the promised restoration to begin. We see, thus, that Christ's bodily departure from heaven at His second coming brings about — *of necessity* — the "times of restoration." The two events are linked together inseparably!

Verse 17 lets us know that any believers still alive at this time, having been changed and given immortality (1 Cor. 15:51-57), will be caught up ("snatched away," "raptured") together with the resurrected "dead in Christ" to meet the Lord in the air. This could be called the grand reunion of all the faithful with their Lord! (Compare Heb. 11:39, 40.) The result of this reunion, Paul tells us, is that from then on "we shall ever be with the Lord." Wherever He is, His people will be also!

Verse 18 declares the purpose of this whole passage: to give Paul's readers comfort and encouragement. These promises are for us as believers today! The truth of Christ's return and the resurrection of His people to immortality should give us comfort, reassurance, and hope in times of sorrow and each day of this mortal life!

There is nothing in this passage that teaches or implies that we meet Christ in the air

so that He may take us to heaven, after that meeting takes place in the air. Rather, since it is His "coming" that is in view, we know that the Bible teaches that He will *return to this earth* when He comes. Jesus promised, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory" (Matt. 25:31). Christ's "throne of glory" is the throne of David to be given to Him at that day (Luke 1:32, 33), a throne to be established in Jerusalem, as it once was, long ago (Isa. 2:1-4; 9:6, 7). Meanwhile, during His stay in heaven, Christ is seated with His Father on *God's* throne, distinct from Christ's *own* throne (Rev. 3:21). God's throne is in heaven; Christ's throne will be on earth!

This means that after our meeting with Christ in the air, He will continue His descent down to the earth, accompanied by all His saints and all the holy angels. Our going out to meet Him is to allow His saints to be the first to welcome Him back and to accompany Him to His inheritance and ours — **the earth** (Heb. 1:2; Matt. 5:5). An interesting parallel to this meeting is the one in Acts 28:13-16. The Apostle Paul was on his way to Rome, and the believers there had heard

of his coming. They went out to meet him before he got to their city, so that they could welcome him and accompany him the rest of the way. In daily life, we often use the same custom, to go to the airport to meet a coming visitor and to take him or her home with us. The Bible represents the saints going out to meet Christ, not Christ going out to meet the saints! There is an important difference between the two ideas. (The writer's tract, "The Parousia of Jesus," contains further information on this question.) ✠



On Hair and Hearts

Pastor Ken Howe

“Hey, Dad, let’s go into town and see the Christmas lights! Dad! Dad, are you awake?”
Actually, I was awake, but I was pretending not to be.

“Dad, I know you’re not asleep. You’re not snoring. If you were asleep, there’d be noise.” I’d been found out.

“Do we have to go tonight? I’ve been here on the couch all evening, and my hair probably looks like a lumpy potato.”

“Yeah. So?”

“I don’t want anybody to see me with my head looking like a lumpy potato!”

“We see you like this every day. It’s no big deal.” At this point my wife came into the room.

“Hey, why don’t we go into town and see the Christmas lights?”

“Because my head looks like a lumpy potato.”

“Yeah. So?”

“What if somebody sees me?”

“Look out the window. It’s dark. Nobody’s going to see your lumpy hair.” We headed into town to see the Christmas lights.

“What are you doing!!!???”

“I’m turning on the overhead light for just a minute. I need to find a dollar to put in the park donation box. Don’t have a panic attack.”

“Somebody will see me!!!”

“Dad, we’re driving through the country. But, just in case, I’ll be on the lookout for any judgmental raccoons.”

We finally made it to the park entrance where there was a small booth and a box for donations to help support the light display. Just as I pulled up and stretched out my hand to drop in the dollar, a guy jumped out from behind the booth and said, “Hi. I’m from the local newspaper. We’re doing a front-page story on donations to the park. Can I take your picture?”

All around me guffaws were being stifled. “Uh . . . Well . . . I . . . Uh . . . I suppose.”

Click! Flash! I could see the headline: POTATO HEAD DONATES TO PARK FUND. I did have a deep spiritual sense that no one would care what my hair looked like, but vanity has a way of seizing our sanity at times. It happens even to pastors.

Some individuals are vain because of insecurity. In a society that worships the superficial, it’s very easy to lose one’s sense of place and purpose. We get so focused on the need to fit in that vanity born of insecurity is common. Insecurity is probably one of the root systems of my own vanity. I’m in my early fifties now, and I’ve been having a mid-life crisis ever since puberty.

Some of us like to make ourselves look nice in a public service (we’ve seen what we look like first thing in the morning). It’s a creative act in the sense that we’re trying to create order out of chaos, sort of like trying to build a beautiful china cabinet out of scrap wood from the garage — we do the best we can with the materials at hand. I guess that makes it a godly undertaking (see Genesis 1).

Others among us are simply making every effort to feel good about ourselves. It’s not an evil thing, an anti-Christian thing. In fact, it can be a very joyful thing. Our great God has created us to appreciate order of form and function.

But there IS a very dark type of vanity that hurts and harasses and becomes, in effect, a subtle form of violent



On Hair and Hearts

Pastor Ken Howe

abuse. It's the type of vanity that lords itself over those of lesser position in society (even in the church).

Paul had to write a scathing letter to the Corinthian group because of a dark vanity that had manifested itself as a gaudy show of spiritual gifts. "My gift's better than your gift!" had become the church's mission statement. A dark-hearted attempt to gain a power hold had caused an unnecessary tension and unhealthy rivalry among the fellowship. It's not that the spiritual gifts themselves were evil; it was simply that they were being used with anti-Christian zeal, offering entertainment and ego-fuel at the expense of edification and education and brotherhood (see I Corinthians 1, 12, 13).

Jesus once scolded the vain religious leaders in His time and space by noting that they had broadened the hems of their garments, but in doing so had become like fancy tombs — nice to look at but filled with dead men's bones. It's possible, according to Jesus, for our nice clothes to be nothing more than containers for bodies moving through this world to create only chaos (see Matthew 23:27-28). I would imagine that there are business and spiritual leaders today

who dress immaculately from a position of power while some in their offices and factories and congregations dress as they are able from a position of relative societal weakness. James warned against giving this kind of cancerous ego-disease from which the notables suffered "a place of honor" (see James 2:1-7).

As we see, vanity can take innocent or evil forms. We need to be very alert lest our own quirky vanities be transformed into things demented and devious. The meditation question we must each ask ourselves is this: Am I wearing my vanity as a show of pretended superiority, or am I simply trying to be the best I'm able to be? There's a fine line between the two, and I'm sure it's very easy to step across that line.

The great motivator for moderate living can be found in the promise that God looks not at the face of man, but at the heart. Whatever we do must be done out of the recognition that God finds loveliness in the contrite and humble attitudes of individuals who consider others better than themselves. It was the Way of Jesus, our Good Shepherd. It must be the road we walk as well.

Wow! To think that when God looks at us He doesn't see lumpy hair or wrinkles or flab or thin hair or crooked teeth — that's LIBERATING! God loves us because our hearts are filled with love and compassion and forgiveness and a will to do well for Him and for Our Savior.

Advent is a time to enjoy the bright lights and happy sounds, but it's also a time to remember that Salvation was attended by a lone light overhead and by the humble creak of a stable door. Any type of vanity, even the most innocent, pales in comparison with the simple grace and beauty of the truly Humble.

Oh, by the way, the newspaper printed a picture of an attractive young lady with a smile on her face. Go figure.

⊕



We Have a Law

A Perspective on the Death of Jesus

Brian K. Wright

What did Jesus say or do that so upset the Jews that they hauled Him before Pilate and demanded His death? The narrative of the trial of Jesus holds some interesting clues.

The Trial of Jesus (John 18:29-19:15)

“What accusation do you bring against this man?” Pilate asked Jesus’ accusers. “If this man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered him to you” came the vague reply. Now I’m not trying to justify the actions of Pilate but put yourself in his sandals for a moment. What would you make of such an accusation? It sounds very much like an accusation with no merit.

“Take him yourselves, and judge him according to your law.” I can picture Pilate rising from his chair, turning his back to the Jews and striding majestically toward the nearest exit. What a waste of my time, he probably thought to himself.

“We are not permitted to put anyone to death” came the chilling reply. Pilate must have frozen in his tracks upon hearing these words. Did they say death? Maybe this was more serious than he initially thought.

Pilate called for Jesus to testify before him. After questioning Him about whether or not He was a king, Pilate determined that Jesus presented no threat. He went out to the Jews and

said “I find no guilt in him.” With that he offered to release Jesus to them. Pilate must have hoped that the Jews would be satisfied that he had taken their complaint seriously.

“Not this man, but Barrabas!” they cried out. By that time Pilate must have been frustrated with the mob. Why didn’t they accept his course of action? Were they questioning his judgment? With exasperation over a growing crisis not of his own making, Pilate ordered Jesus to be flogged. The man is probably guilty of some offense, he may have reasoned.

“Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him.” Surely the Jews would be satisfied with the punishment meted out to this man who had so incensed them.

“Crucify him, crucify him,” they shouted angrily. Suddenly filled with fear, Pilate realized that he was in danger of losing control. The crowd was seething with anger. Under stress, Pilate lost his composure. “Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no fault in him!” he shouted. He may have reasoned that since the Jews had already informed him that they couldn’t put anyone to death, they wouldn’t actually kill Jesus. Maybe he thought the Jews might offer another alternative.

“We have a law, and by that law he ought to die because he made himself out to be the Son of God!” they shouted. Now Pilate was even more afraid. Once more, he took Jesus in for questioning.

Pilate tried one last time to release Jesus but the Jews would have none of it. “If you release this man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar.” Now it was clear to Pilate. For the sake of political self-preservation, he would have to sacrifice the life of an innocent man.

It was time to sear his conscience and give the people what they wanted. Taking his place in the judgment seat for the final act of this terrible drama, Pilate brought Jesus before them and said, “Behold, your king.” Perhaps he could convince the Jews that upon further questioning he had been able to find fault with Jesus after all.

“Away with him, away with him, crucify him!” they shouted, apparently aware that they were about to get what they had requested.

“Shall I crucify your king?” he must have said in a mocking tone of voice. “We have no king but Caesar,” the chief priests replied. Ah, loyalty from the mob! His career salvaged, Pilate



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A Perspective on the Death of Jesus

Brian K. Wright

him!” (Luke 9:35). All other testimony pales in comparison to the testimony of Jesus’ Father.

Bring in Moses Again

Moses had also written, “It will come about that whoever will not listen to My [God’s] words which he [the prophet] shall speak in My [God’s] name, I [God] Myself will require it of him” (Deut. 18:19). God promises a severe penalty for anyone who will not listen to the prophet He will raise up. That the prophet is God’s son, Jesus, is evident from the Scriptures.

We Have a Law

That the Jews did not listen to Jesus, that is, did not believe the words He spoke, has been clearly demonstrated by their words and actions. This failure to listen (believe) is the key that leads us to the writing of Moses, the particular law they appealed to. And what was this law?

Moses wrote, “But the prophet who speaks a word presumptuously in My [God’s] name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he speaks in the name of other gods, **that prophet shall die**” (Deut. 18:20).

Continuing Ramifications

The Jews did not believe the words that Jesus spoke. Therefore, they viewed Him

then, and still view Him now, as a false prophet. Aryeh Kaplan writes, “The Bible (Deuteronomy 18:22) says that one of the signs of a true prophet is when his prophecy comes true exactly. There is no evidence that Jesus fulfilled this condition.”³

This is of course tragic. In discussing the current state of the Jews, Paul teaches that they have been cut off for their unbelief, but they may be grafted back in if they do not continue in their unbelief (Rom. 11: 20, 23).

There is also an important message here for those who profess to believe in Jesus. “Quite right, they [the Jews] were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith [in the gospel message proclaimed by Jesus]. Do not be conceited, but fear; for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you either. Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell [because of their unbelief], severity, but to you, God’s kindness; if you continue in his kindness [through belief in the words of His Son]; otherwise you also will be cut off” (Rom. 11:20-22).

Jesus warned, “He who rejects me and does not receive my sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last

day” (John 12:48). As we have seen, the word Jesus spoke was the message that God gave Him to proclaim. Those who do not believe the message will be judged and punished for their unbelief.

It is therefore absolutely essential that we believe the message delivered by the messenger. And what was the message that Jesus proclaimed? “Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and **proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom**” (Matt. 4:23).

The Jews rejected the gospel Jesus preached and were cut off because of their unbelief. Many today, both Jews and Gentiles, are cut off because they have not believed the gospel of the kingdom. To them I say, hear these words of Jesus the Messiah: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15). ☩

¹ *Jesus and the Gospels*, Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, p. 299.

² *The Real Messiah? A Jewish Response to Missionaries*, New York: National Conference of Synagogue Youth/Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, 1985, p. 66.

³ *The Real Messiah?* p. 66.



'Tis the Season

Tom Colburn

Because people have tarnished its image and perverted its essence is no reason to reject it absolutely. No, I'm not talking about Christianity — although I could be. I'm talking about Christmas.

In Luke 9:49, John came to Jesus and said, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name; and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow along with us." But Jesus said to him, "Do not hinder him, for he who is not against you is for you" (NASB).

Christmas is the blending together of several traditions. It is neither wholly holy nor purely pagan. What it is, or can be for Christians, is an opportunity, an unusually open opportunity to spread the Good News of the Kingdom to many ears dull to God the other eleven months of the year. At least in the United States, only the fringes of society object to the mention of Christ on Christmas. Even the Jews will at least tolerate it. It's a time for uncensored evangelism.

In considering our opportunity, the old saying *Don't look a gift horse in the mouth* comes to mind. That bit of advice stems from a situation where someone receives a present (gift) of a horse, and then has the effrontery to check the condition of the beast's teeth!

Christmas, if not a gift from God, is certainly a golden opportunity to present God's light to a world sitting in darkness. There is little,

even within the church, in the form of celebration that retains the purity of its origin. How many New Testament synagogues, temples or tents had a baptismal pool? Did the Apostles commemorate the Last Supper sipping grape juice from little plastic cups and eating a tidbit of a saltine cracker? Suffice it to say we've done a fair amount of modifying when it comes to most of our celebrations.

Christmas for Christians is a celebration of Christ's birth. We are celebrating the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was born. Had He not been born we would not have a savior. Had we not a savior we'd be stuck trying to satisfy the letter of the Law. Since no one (except Jesus) is guiltless before the Law, had Christ not been born, we'd all be toast! I think that's a pretty good reason to rejoice and celebrate the birth of our Messiah! Amen?

Christmas is not a commandment. We can celebrate it or not. It is, however, an event of significance (Christ's birth, not the specific day on the calendar). Let's look at where Christmas in its current form came from.

If we can believe what we read on the Internet (a shaky assumption at best), Saint Nicholas was a Catholic bishop of Myra, a town in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). He lived sometime around 300 AD.

There are about as many variations of his story as Carter

has liver pills (or peanuts), but as far as I can tell Nicholas was a wealthy businessman with a kind heart. He learned of a fellow merchant who had fallen on hard times. The man had three daughters, all betrothed, but unable to wed for lack of a dowry. Back in those days, in that part of the world, a father had to pay the family of the would-be groom a sum of money and/or merchandise upon their marriage. (Thank goodness that custom faded. I have four daughters!)

Dowries take on different forms around the world, but apparently, in this particular culture, the father needed to provide a dowry in order for his daughters to marry. Their family was poor, so the daughters couldn't wed. Shame was upon them.

Nicholas took pity on them and legend has it that he came to their house under the cover of darkness and deposited a bag of money (some say down the chimney). This money was sufficient to pay one dowry as well as feed the rest of the family for a year. Elated, the eldest daughter married and the family lived over the next year not knowing who the benefactor was.

But by the end of the year the money had run out (apparently Daddy hadn't gotten a job yet), and daughter number two was crying bitter tears of woe — no money, no marriage. But in the wee hours one night, the kind-hearted Nicholas struck again.



'Tis the Season

Tom Colburn

Another bag of gold went down the chimney.

So the second daughter was able to marry and the family lived another year on the mysterious giver's gold. But alas, the third daughter remained. And when the money was gone at year's end, she cried.

This time, the father was determined to discover who the generous man was. Confident he'd receive the gold a third time, he waited and waited night after night until at last he heard the prancing of feet on the rooftop. Down came the gold and out went the father. Spotting Nicholas walking away he ran and caught him. "Why did you not come to our door and let us know it was you?" the father asked the white-bearded man. "Because it is better to give and only God knows," the man replied.

Better indeed, and so the town agreed as did the church who made him Bishop of Myra and later canonized him a saint. The Dutch apparently preserved the tale of Saint Nicholas, *Sinter Klaas* (Santa Claus), and imported it to America when founding the colony of New Amsterdam (which became New York in 1664).

What a difference a couple of millennia makes. Take the same guy today. His union went on strike a couple years ago. They're living on unemployment and food stamps and maybe the wife's waiting tables somewhere. Some rich clown running for mayor

climbs up on his roof and drops a bag full of hundred dollar bills weighted with 16 rolls of Susan B. Anthony coins down his chimney. Unfortunately, the fireplace has been sealed off and replaced with a Jotul woodstove. So the bag of cash shoots down the flue, slams open the stove door, and whaps the dog on the back of his head causing a concussion.

Meanwhile, the guy's campaign crew along with CNN is across the street shooting the entire "selfless act." What do you think this father is going to do? Do you imagine he's going to hand over a pile of cash to his daughter's significant other so "Snake" can buy yet another used Harley? No! This is 2002. He tells his daughter and her tattooed fiance to get a life and a job. Daddy's off to Jolly Jim's Automall to buy a new F-150. And sure, he'll vote for what's-his-name hanging off his rain gutter for mayor right after he sues the little red suit off him for brain-damaging his dog! But I digress.

From there the Christmas story evolved through a poem by Clement Clarke Moore, "A Visit from St. Nicholas," published in the *New York Sentinel* on December 23, 1823, and reprinted around the world in the following years. It was Moore who added the elf and sleigh and miniature reindeer and much of what we have today in our Christmas tale.

To be sure there are other traditions interwoven in the Christmas celebration, but

nothing that makes it inherently evil. Is it a Biblical tradition? No. But neither are Thanksgiving and the Fourth of July — yet most Christians celebrate each and give God thanks for His rich blessings bestowed upon our country.

As a kid I always loved the 25th of December. Possibly because that's also my birthday. But even as an adult, there is much good we make with the Christmas celebration. We can put a nativity scene in front of our homes. We can send Christmas cards with nice, biblical greetings inside. We can help our children put on Christmas plays attracting many non-churchgoers from the community. We can even go caroling door to door without getting dragged into the town square and stoned. It's a great country and a wonderful opportunity.

But beyond all of these traditional ways of Christmas witnessing, the season allows us a natural opening to share the love of our God and His son, our savior, and what they have meant to our lives. If we can't seize this opportunity to spread God's love during the Christmas season, what hope have we the rest of the year?

Thank God for this country of free speech, for this holiday of Christian celebration, and most of all for the love of God and His Son whose light we have the privilege to share in the lonely darkness that covers far too many in this current world. ☩



More Than a Manger and a Cross

Robert C. Bernheisel

As we approach the time of the year when we remember the birth of Jesus the Christ I am struck by the fact that the life of Jesus was about more than a manger and a cross. In the 89 chapters of the Gospels I find only four chapters about the birth of Jesus and six about the crucifixion. Two of the Gospels do not even mention His birth. Certainly the writers thought that Jesus was about much more than being born and dying.

His death provided the way for people to be born anew, but His life showed us how to live the new life. His first sermon, and His continuous message, is summarized in Matthew 4:17: "Change your hearts and lives, because the kingdom of God is coming soon" (NCV).

Jesus spent much of His time correcting misconceptions that people had about God. Many of His messages began with "you have heard it said." Then He would proceed to give a better light on the issue. Jesus' messages continually dealt with issues of the heart, the inner man, because that is where the greatest need and error occurs.

Jesus spoke of the importance of truth (John 8:31-32). Many, in their zeal for the truth, form a list of what they believe is important. Some will compare themselves with others and use their own list as the official standard of truth. Then they will feel better about themselves. The rich young man did this (Matt. 19:16-22), as did the Pharisees.

However, Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." He did not say "I teach the truth" or "I know the truth"; He said, "I *am* . . . the truth." Jesus is the standard. He is the list. If we are to make a comparison it can only be to Jesus. The measure of truth is not a list of doctrines that we use to compare ourselves to others. The measure of truth *in us* is how much of Christ shows *through us*.

People could see the evidence of God's Holy Spirit in Jesus. He had love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control. Sinners were attracted to Him. Zacchaeus became an honest man when he met Jesus. Prostitutes gave up their lifestyles of sin. The disciples dropped what they were doing to follow Jesus. These people did not change because of fear of God's punishment. They changed because they saw something better. They were drawn by the love of God.

I am glad that God had Jesus preaching and teaching for over three years before he died on the cross. If it were not for the Gospels which tell of Jesus' life, I might not know how compassionate, loving, and forgiving God really is. Those qualities of God are in the Old Testament, but I can see them more clearly after having read the Gospels.

Since Jesus is the image of God I know that the way He

acted is a perfect representation of God. He went about doing good, healing, encouraging, and giving direction to the kingdom of God. He wanted people to know God and have abundant life. Jesus said that whoever saw Him saw the Father. He was not speaking of a physical resemblance, but of God's character.

God's intention in creating humanity was that we would seek after Him and enter into a parent/child love relationship with Him. The most important commandment, according to Jesus, is to love God. The second is to love one another. I believe the purpose of the second command is to draw people to the first.

We need to do more than just teach what Jesus taught. We need to experience Him. When the woman who had a bleeding problem said to herself, "If I can just touch Him," there was a great crowd of people around him. There were many people in the crowd who bumped into Jesus, some probably with physical illnesses, but these were not healed. When she touched Him and was healed Jesus turned and asked, "Who touched me?"

His disciples thought His question was strange because they were in a crowd and a lot of people were touching Him. But they were not touching Him the way she was. They were bumping into Him. She touched Him in faith. Sometimes our religious activity is just



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bumping into Jesus.

Jesus is more concerned about lessons of the heart than of the mind. The Sadducees were in error about the resurrection. They thought there would never be one. Some of the Pharisees believed in natural immortality. But Jesus showed more concern, throughout the Gospels, about the hardness of the hearts of the Sadducees and Pharisees.

When they attempted to disprove the resurrection with a hypothetical question about marriage He did not attempt to prove the resurrection. Instead He told them they were in error about life after the resurrection and the power of God to resurrect (Matt. 22:23-32). I find it interesting that there is no record of His correcting their doctrinal error until they tried to make an issue of it. I think it was because they had a bigger problem and that is what concerned Him.

One can be correct about many teachings and still not be right with God. After all, the demons believe in the oneness of God. The Pharisees and the Sadducees actually had widely different doctrines, but the Scriptures group them together because they acted in the same way. They were not interested in the truth of God; instead they were concerned about the threat that Jesus posed to their power basis. Truth is to be found not through their formulas, but through a love and faith

relationship with God.

Jesus constantly challenged the established way of thinking. If we examine the impact Jesus had on His disciples we see in the apostles' letters a constant message of love and faith with holiness. Their chief concern was our salvation. Their highest concern in our salvation was the character of Christ growing in us.

The apostle Paul was a changed man after his conversion. It was not just a change of theology, but a change of the man himself from the inside. He changed from a self-righteous, violent Pharisee to a man who had the real truth from the inside. He wrote, "This is my prayer: that your love may grow more and more in knowledge and understanding, that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ — to the glory and praise of God" (Phil. 1:9-11).

The purpose of knowledge and understanding is for love to grow. We can study many different topics from the Bible, but if the love of Christ is not growing then the study is like gas in a child's balloon. It only lifts itself. We can study and accumulate facts but only Jesus can make His love grow in us.

Paul also wrote, "the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good

conscience and a sincere faith" (1 Tim. 1:5). This should be the goal of our teachings — not just what we are aiming at but where we are starting from. An ironworker can use his material to build walls or bridges. We have the same material, but what are we building? If you see sin in someone's life or disagree with their teaching do you build a wall to protect yourself or a bridge for them to come to Jesus? If I see error in someone's teaching, but they act more like Jesus, then I have nothing to brag about. My prayer at that point is for God to help me, make me, mold me, to let more of Jesus live through me.

The best way to teach the truth is not as a reaction to someone's error, but as an action coming from Christ. A lot of people know about the manger and the cross. What they need to know is Jesus. They need a second touch from Him so they can see clearly His purpose in what He did and be prepared for what He is going to do.

As the angel of the Lord told the apostles (Acts 5:20), "Go . . . and tell the people the full message of this new life." ✠



The Star and the Sign

Announcing Christ's First Coming and His Second Coming

Pastor Jim Mattison

The STAR - Matthew 2

Wise men, astrologers, from east of Israel, saw a strange star in the west over Israel. They understood it signified the birth of a King who would be "King of the Jews." They undoubtedly were familiar with Balaam's prophecy in Numbers 24:17: "A Star shall come forth from Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise from Israel."

These men felt they should pay homage to this baby King, gathered up valuable gifts to present to Him, and naturally set their course for Jerusalem, Israel's capital city. Herod was troubled when these strangers told him they had seen the King's star, and asked him where this King was. He immediately assumed this baby must be the CHRIST (v. 4), and calling together the head priests over the 24 priestly divisions plus the scribes, he asked them where this Messiah was to be born. Their answer, based on Micah 5:2 was that He was to be born in Bethlehem, a few miles south of Jerusalem. Strangely, Herod sent them alone to Bethlehem to find the baby (God's providence).

As the wise men went their way, suddenly His star immediately appeared to lead them. When they saw the star they "rejoiced exceedingly," for it confirmed to them that the God of heaven had chosen THEM to be the ones to announce this King of the Jews who was to rule the world. How glad they were to see the star again.

Messiah's star led them to the very house where Mary and Jesus were (vv. 9-11). They paid homage to this little baby and gave their costly gifts, which later paid the holy family's expenses for the

weeks ahead on their journey to and from Egypt.

God, continuing His grace upon the wise men, warned them in a dream to avoid Herod and return home. Then an angel warned Joseph in a dream to take the "Child and His mother" and flee to Egypt, for Herod would try to kill Him.

A special star from God was used to announce Christ's first coming. And we also see the hand of God in every happening in this story: in His good dealings with these devout wise men in every circumstance of their journey; in protecting the Baby from Herod; in the angelic appearance to the shepherds.

Some think this star was a meteor, because it reappeared and moved. Obviously it was a star fairly close to the ground, not one high in the heavens, for "it went on before them, until it came and stood over where the Child was" (v. 9). It seems to have then disappeared. God predicted that star would announce His Son, and it did. The religious leaders of Israel were told about it, but did nothing. The ones who received the blessing then were the wise men, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus, and the shepherds.

The moral: we should be alert to God's workings. Christ has come with healing in His wings for sinners! The price was paid! We can be saved! We can have peace with God! God now has given us a wonderful hope: restoration and life in His coming Kingdom on earth! Let us be servants of this "King of the Jews!"

The Sign of His Second Coming—Matthew 24:30

After the darkening of the sun in the end of this age, "then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky," the tribes of earth will mourn, and they will see Christ coming in Power and Glory.

What will this sign be? The sign of His first coming was a star. Will this second sign be another star? Or a Scepter (Num. 24:17)? Or will it be the "glory of the Lord" (that appeared to the shepherds)? Remember, the earth will be dark with no sun, moon, and stars shining. The "glory of the Lord" is bright and shining. What if the glory of the Lord lights the planet after the intense darkness? Such a happening would certainly make the guilty "mourn." Every eye shall see Him this time, not only Israel.

The point? Jesus said we should "watch." Watch for what? For His coming? Watch our lives to make sure we are serving Him? Jesus spoke a parable about servants that were supposed to be using their talents wisely so at accounting time they would not be found wanting. He spoke other parables about servants being on the lookout for the return of their master. Again and again He told us to Watch. Hebrews 9:27 advises us that "those who eagerly await Him" will experience the "salvation" that Christ will bring to His people when He "shall appear a second time."

We need to be people who are eagerly awaiting Christ's second appearance. We will know this second SIGN when He comes. Let's WATCH for it, and examine ourselves, to see if we are in the faith. ✚

The Children's Page

A Little Child Shall Lead Them



Reprinted from The Restitution Herald Dec. 23, 1911

“And the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child will lead them” (Isaiah 11:6).

Rachel Moore and her baby brother George sat on low stools before the great fireplace watching the sparks fly up the chimney. Mother and the older sister Mary were clearing the dishes away, for they had just finished breakfast. Mr. Moore was busy outside feeding their horses and milking the cows.

Presently he would come into the cabin and they would dress in their very best and drive five miles through the cold to the little log church

where he would preach a sermon. For he was a minister in this pioneer community.

It was Christmas morning and the children had the gifts that they had found in their stockings piled around them. There was a pretty doll for Rachel and a rocking-horse for George. The horse was too big to go into the stocking, so it had been tied to a chair near the fireplace. There were warm mittens and scarves for both children, a bright red ball for George and a little Bible for Rachel who was learning to read. Then there were plenty of nuts and apples for everyone.

Rachel had loved her doll, tried on the new mittens and scarf, read a few verses from the Bible and now with her doll in her arms she was watching the fire and thinking of the friends who had been with her the Christmas before in the little town farther east.

The Moore family had come to their new home during the summer and although they had made friends quickly, the nearest neighbors lived four miles away and it was not often that the children could see each other. So Rachel and George sometimes played with make-believe friends

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and if you will believe it, they had good times, too.

On the mantel above the fireplace was a little framed picture that had been given to Mary by her father and mother. It showed a little child with a great, shaggy lion, a lamb, and some other animals. It seemed so strange to George and Rachel that a lion should be painted with a little child in that way, for they had been told that lions would eat children when they were hungry. Pictures were very real to the little boy and as he looked from the dancing flames to the picture above it seemed to him that the lion would soon roar and frighten him dreadfully.

“Why doesn't that little girl run away?” he asked of Mary as she finished her task and came to the fire to warm. For the wintry wind made the little cabin very cold that morning. “That old lion will get her if she doesn't hurry,” he added.

Mary smiled as she held the little fellow up nearer the picture. “That lion won't hurt her, George,” she said, “For that is a picture of the time when lions and bears and snakes won't hurt us any more. And we can play with



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them just as we do with the calves and puppies that are out in the shed."

"But won't that big lion bite us?" asked George as his chubby finger pointed to the great animal that seemed to bother him most.

"No, not at all," said Mary. "That picture is the way it will be when Jesus comes again."

"O-o-o-h! I know 'bout Jesus," exclaimed George. "Jesus was born on Cwismas, wasn't he?"

"Yes, and I think his mama got a pretty fine Christmas gift, don't you?" asked Mrs. Moore as she came up and patted the little fellow on the head.

"Yes, sir! I fink I'd like a Cwismas gift like that," said George promptly. "I fink I'd like that better than a wocking-horse."

"He was your Christmas gift too, dear," said Mrs. Moore. "God gave Him to everybody."

"Then why isn't he here now?" asked George.

"He has gone away to live

with God now, but some day He will come back and then everything will be exactly perfect," said Mrs. Moore. "There will be no wicked people then who will want to hurt others. There will be no hungry people like those poor babies we saw last winter. No one will be sick. The older people will not get lame and deaf and blind, and babies won't get their fingers pinched as you did yesterday.

"The wolves that try so hard to catch Mr. Hodges lambs now, will play with them then, without hurting them. Tiny calves, such as father has at the shed, will lie down with the lions and bears and leopards; and babies will play around them just as Rachel does with her kitty. The snakes that we are all so afraid of now, will not harm anyone. Children may play around their nest without being afraid of them.

"People then won't hurt the animals and so the animals will not harm them. There will be fruit and vegetables to eat and each one will have just what he needs without buying it from someone else. We buy our flour and sugar at the store now, you know, and in the winter we have to have very warm mittens to keep

our fingers from freezing when we go after the things we need. But, we will have all we need to eat then without going so far after it and we will be neither too warm nor too cold. We'll just be happy and everybody will love Jesus so, of course, we will love each other."

"That will be just like Christmas all the time, won't it?" said Rachel who had been listening. "We will have everything we want and Jesus will be there all the time."

"That is fine," said Mrs. Moore. "It will be one long Christmas and we will be far happier than we are even now."

And, when they had gone to church and heard Mr. Moore read, "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them." Even baby George knew what it meant.

⊕



Christmas Crossword

The Restitution Herald

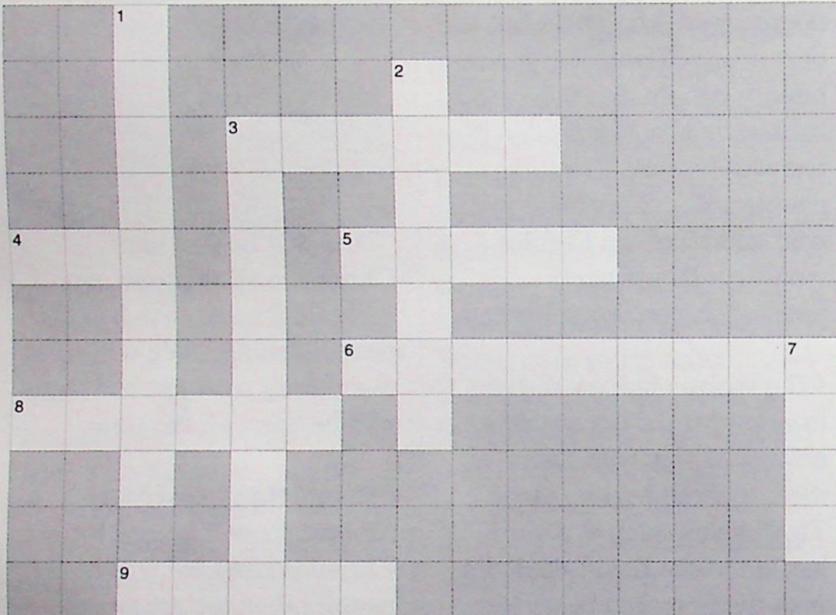


Across

3. The _____ of the world.
4. Glory to ____ in the highest!
5. _____ on earth good will towards men.
6. City where Jesus was born.
8. Where the baby Jesus would be lying.
9. Christmas celebrates His birth.

Down

1. The kind of clothes baby Jesus was wrapped in.
2. Traveled from the east.
3. Heard choirs of angels.
7. Jesus' mother.



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February, March 2003

In the Beginning: A Look Back At the New Creation

Also in this Issue:

- The Forgotten Genesis
- What is the Reason for the Season?
- God is Universal
- How Long is a "Yom"?
- Creation Crossword



Editorial

By the time this issue comes to you the year will be at least a month or two old. New Year's resolutions have started to grow old, and may have even been completely discarded by now. What began with a bang may by now have become a grind. The "newness" of the new year may be wearing off.

The turning of the calendar and the changing of the seasons are reminders to us of the ever-changing nature of this life and age. Change is a constant. And because change has a way of reminding us of our own transition through life and mortality, it can be painful.

From the perspective of our relationship to God the saying is especially true – "the more things change, the more they stay the same." The Creator, the Eternal One is absolutely changeless, and yet a great paradox is that He offers newness. Consider:

"He put a new song in my mouth" (Psalm 40:3)

"those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength" (Isaiah 40:31)

"I declare new things" (Isaiah 42:9)

"Behold, I will do something new (Isaiah 43:19)

"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth (Isaiah 65:17)

"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you (Ezekiel 36:26)

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Can it be said that to know God is to have the quality of newness while remaining unchangeable? If so, and if we have both of

these qualities in balance, then we possess a rare gift that is needed in this world of change. To be absolutely unchangeable in biblical essentials while being "new" in our approach to our contemporary culture is the need of the hour.



The winds of change are blowing today at gale force. We are amidst the greatest information explosion that the world has ever known. The move toward globalization implies drastic change in our way of life. The threat of war (which could be a reality by the time this reaches you) has ominous implications. And economic uncertainty threatens to unravel our comfortable existence.

We can either adapt to change or be swept away by it. The challenges of our times are either obstacles or opportunities. What they prove to be will be determined largely by you and I, and our faith.

While I personally share the sentiments of many others for a "simpler life", I know of no other time in history that I would wish to live than the present. The opportunity to share the gospel through a variety of mediums has never been greater. It is possible today to produce audio/video gospel presentations for CD, DVD, and the Internet, as well as television. There has never before been a time that has afforded us this unparalleled opportunity for "This gospel of the kingdom (to be) preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations" (Matthew 24:14)

May God give to each of us wisdom in knowing how to approach our culture in "newness" while remaining unchangeable in biblical essentials.

Steve Taylor
Director of Communications
Church of God General Conference



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EDITOR
 JEFF FLETCHER

PUBLISHING SPECIALIST
 JUSTIN TAYLOR

PROOFREADER
 SARAH BUZZARD

MAILING AND SUBSCRIPTIONS
 MARCY CLY

ADDRESS EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE TO:
 THE RESTITUTION HERALD, ATTN: JEFF FLETCHER, 130
 WAYNE ST., PONCHATOULA, LA 70454. E-mail:
 happywoodseg@i-55.com

**ADDRESS MAILING AND SUBSCRIPTION
 CORRESPONDENCE TO:**
 THE RESTITUTION HERALD, ATTN: MARCY CLY,
 P. O. BOX 100,000, MORROW, GA 30260 (E-MAIL
 ADDRESS: info@abc-coggc.org).

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- THE RESTITUTION HERALD ADVOCATES:
- THE ONENESS OF GOD (1 COR. 8:6);
 - THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S POWER (ACTS 1:8);
 - JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT. 16:16); AND IS OUR MEDIATOR (1 TIM. 2:5);
 - THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16);
 - THE MORTALITY OF MAN (JOB 4:17; PSA. 146:4);
 - THE NEAR RETURN OF CHRIST (ACTS 1:11), AND LIFE ONLY THROUGH HIM (COL. 3:3);
 - THE LITERAL RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (JOHN 5:28);
 - THE IMMORTALIZATION OF THOSE IN CHRIST (1 COR. 15:53, 54);
 - THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (REV. 21:8);
 - THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32);
 - THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1-3);
 - THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21);
 - IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.

The Beginnings

Pastor Z.B. Duncan

This article is reprinted from the May 1973 Restitution Herald.

“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God” (Psa. 90:2). From this we know that God in truth existed ages before He brought forth the mountains or formed the earth. This being true, He existed before Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

When we study the beginnings, we may be surprised to find that there are more beginnings than one. Mankind in all of his dealing with the beginning tries to make all beginnings one and the same.

When we take Genesis 1:1 and rightly divide it, we will understand this was a beginning of the heavens and earth upon which we dwell, and that God existed long before this, yea, even for all ages past. This was not the beginning of God, but of His creation of the earth and heavens.

“Have ye not read, that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female?” (Matt. 19:4). Is this the same beginning as Genesis 1:1? No. We find the creation of male and female came after a period of five days of God’s time and on the sixth day God created the man and the woman. He made the man first, even before he made the woman. The beginning referred to here, then, is the beginning of the human race after Genesis 1:1.

“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mark 1:1). This beginning of the gospel of Jesus was good news which had its beginning after the preaching of John the Baptist (about 26 AD). This beginning could not be the same beginning as in Genesis 1:1, but was the absolute beginning of the Gospel Dispensation. Had Jesus lived in heaven before and had he given any message of hope to mankind for deliverance, then he would have begun his ministry at a time long before this. The truth is that Jesus began his gospel at this point in time, which was the beginning of the Gospel Dispensation. At

the Genesis beginning there was no fallen race to whom the gospel could be preached.

Each year we have a new beginning. A birthday makes the beginning of another year of life. We find many beginnings in our lives. We have a beginning of going to school, a beginning of high school, a beginning of college, a beginning of our teen-age, a beginning of our courting, a beginning of our marriage, a beginning of our family, and many other beginnings.

“Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word” (Luke 1:2). Note, Luke was an eyewitness of the Word from the beginning. If he spoke of Genesis 1:1, then we are in for a shocking surprise. How could Luke be an eyewitness before he was created, born, or had eyes? We have a similar thought conveyed in 1 John 1:1— “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life.”



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Putting the testimony of both Luke and John together we can be sure that from the beginning they were eyewitnesses and hearers, and they looked upon and their hands handled the Word of life. But if this beginning is the same as Genesis 1:1, then they did these things before they were born or had any physical being. The “beginning” in this Scripture is the beginning of the Word of Life — eternal life by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. This was the beginning of the firstborn of the new creation, a glorious new beginning to all who will believe. Surely, no one would believe that these disciples preexisted and were with God in the creation of Genesis 1:1. Then why should trial be made to make Jesus be with God in the same beginning?

“This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory” (John 2:11). If this was the beginning of the miracles of Jesus, then whose miracles were the creation of the earth, the exodus from Egypt, and the miracles prior to this miracle in Cana? This had to be the first miracle Jesus performed since this

was the beginning of his miracles.

To believe the Scripture in its simplicity is to be sure you rightly divide the Word of God. Thus we conclude that one thing is certain: Christ didn’t perform any miracles before this time.

“Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him” (John 6:64). Was this beginning the beginning of Genesis 1:1? The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ? Or of what beginning was he speaking? We know that he is speaking of the Gospel Dispensation beginning. Any other beginning would be out of order.

“Then said they unto him, who art thou? And Jesus said unto them, even the same that I said unto you from the beginning” (John 8:25). Speaking to those Jews who were present with him, he was making it clear that he was the same that he said he was at the beginning. It would be unreasonable to assume he was talking of Genesis 1:1. In that case, these Jews, too, would have been with him and they also

would have existed when the earth and the heavens were made. But it would do them no good to tell anything of the beginning of Genesis 1:1, since they had not yet been created. This was the beginning of the gospel, the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

“He was a murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44). This verse is speaking of the devil, and we are in trouble if we say the beginning in this verse is the same as in Genesis 1:1. If we do this, then we have God creating a murderer. At that time there was no one to murder. Murder is a sin and there was no sin until after man sinned in the garden of Eden. This beginning was not the beginning of the gospel of Christ, but the beginning of sin. “He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning” (1 John 3:8).

“Ye shall also bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning” (John 15:27). Jesus made it very plain that his disciples had been with him from “the beginning.” Which beginning? Now if Jesus had been with God



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from Genesis 1:1 and his disciples had been with him from that beginning, then all of the disciples and Christ preexisted. The truth can be known when we realize that these disciples had been with him from the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Again we have: "These things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you" (John 16:4). Same truth!

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). This has been paraphrased to read: "In the beginning was Jesus Christ." This is error. "Word" here comes from the Greek word *logos*. It is translated "account, intent, matter, reason, speech, utterance, and word."

"In the beginning was the account, the intent, the matter, the reason, the speech, the utterance, the word. The same was in the beginning with God." What was with God in the beginning? "The account, intent, matter, reason, speech, utterance, and word. And the account, intent, matter, utterance, reason, speech or word was God." It is very

simple that the reason everything is here existing is that God is the reason.

The primary meaning of the word *logos* is "reason." In the beginning was the reason, and the reason was God. The same (reason) was in the beginning with God. To try to make this reason a person, or something it is not, is error.

"Ye men of Israel, hear these words" (Acts 2:22). Plural! Does this mean there are many gods, each being a god when it comes out of the mouth of a man? "To this agree the words [*logoi*, plural] of the prophets" (Acts 15:15). We can attain wisdom as we see that the *logos* is to us the intent, reason, or utterance. *Logos* is best described as the outward expression of the inward thought. "At the beginning God expressed himself" (John 1:1, Phillips).

We must conclude that there are many beginnings in the Bible. We find that Christ is the beginning (Col. 1:18), and yet he is not the beginning spoken of in Genesis 1:1. If this were the case, there would be no need of the new creation.

To understand the Word of Truth we must consider that Jesus Christ made it plain in Revelation 22:13: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." What does he mean? Jesus is the beginning of the new creation and the end of the old. He is the first Redeemer who died to put away sins, and the last one. If we put all things in their respective beginnings, we will at once come to a more perfect understanding of the truth of Scripture and will find a greater blessing in store for us as the reason, intent, and utterance of God become plain before us.



The Forgotten Genesis

Brian K. Wright

The Nicene Creed is recited by millions of professing Christians as a proclamation of their faith. Concerning Jesus the creed says, "We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made . . ." Acceptance of this statement of belief is virtually a mandatory requirement of orthodox Christianity. Historically, those who rejected the statement were labeled as heretics and suffered persecution and martyrdom. Clearly then this is an issue of life and death importance.

Surely all will agree that Christian belief must be grounded in Scripture. It is the duty of every Christian to search the Scriptures for confirmation of any proposed creed. The truth about the origin and nature of Jesus is found in a series of New Testament verses that I refer to as "the forgotten genesis."

The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*¹ defines the Greek word "genesis" as birth, with the derived senses of "what has come into being" and "life."

How appropriate that the word is used as the title for the first book of the Bible.

It is even more profound that this same word is applied to Jesus in Matthew 1:18: "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit." The word translated "birth" is the Greek word *genesis*. That this is the word used in the original Greek language text may easily be confirmed by consulting such sources as *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* and an *Interlinear Bible*.

The importance of this is seen when we recall that *genesis* means "what has come into being." It is absolutely inconceivable that Matthew 1:18 attests to God coming into being! Clearly the verse addresses the genesis, or coming into being, of the man called Jesus.

The word "begotten" is found in Matthew 1:20b: "for the child who has been begotten in her is of the Holy Spirit." The word translated "begotten" is the Greek word *gennaō*. It means to beget or father.² Jesus was miraculously begotten (fathered) by God in

Mary. God did not become Jesus; He fathered Jesus.

A companion verse to Matthew 1:18 is Luke 1:35: "The angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and *for that reason* the holy child shall be called the Son of God.'" Jesus came into being, and is called the Son of God, because of the miracle that God performed by His Spirit in the womb of Mary.

There is not even a hint in either Matthew 1:18 or Luke 1:35 that Jesus actually preexisted his birth in Bethlehem approximately 2000 years ago. Why is this important? Because the Nicene Creed as well as the doctrine of the Trinity cannot be true if Jesus did not preexist his birth.

Brace yourselves, my friends, enemies too for that matter, for there are in fact many verses of Scripture that orthodox Christianity relies upon to prove the preexistence of Jesus. As seekers of truth we must honestly examine these verses and we dare not reject the truth we find there.



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Let's briefly examine some of the more common verses that are used by some to prove that Jesus preexisted his birth.

John 1:1-3 "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and apart from him nothing came into being that has come into being." This is the primary text used by orthodox Christianity to prove that Jesus preexisted his birth, that he is God and that he is the creator.

The Greek term *logos* is translated into the English term "word." The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* defines *logos* as "to reckon" or "to explain."³ This source adds that the term can thus be rendered narrative, speech or saying. These are all activities that occur in the mind before being pronounced or uttered. "Word" is therefore an acceptable translation for the thought or plan God had in mind when creating. There is no need to picture an actual preexisting non-human being called Jesus in these verses, unless you are grasping for reasons to prop up man's creeds and doctrines!

John 1:14 states, "And the

word [plan, purpose, reason, thought, etc.] became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory, glory as of the only begotten [unique, only one of his kind] from the Father, full of grace and truth." This verse should be viewed as a companion verse with Matthew 1:18 and Luke 1:35. When the time was right in God's plan (Gal. 4:4), He caused Jesus to be born.

John 8:58 "Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.'" There is no doubt that this statement implies preexistence, but of what sort? As an engineer, I have planned and designed structures that exist initially only in my mind, then on paper and finally in actuality. Wouldn't it be correct to say that these structures preexisted the time when they actually came into being? Can the same not be said about Jesus existing before Abraham lived in this same sense in the plan of God?

John 17:5 "Now, Father, glorify me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was." The setting of this verse is just before Jesus is betrayed and crucified. Jesus is asking God to glorify both him and God through the imminent crucifixion/

resurrection. Here we should recall that Jesus is said to have been slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). Jesus was to receive glory as the result of willingly carrying out God's plan. It was this planned glory of Jesus that existed prior to his birth that he was referring to.

Most people probably do not believe that human beings exist before their birth. Yet many insist that Jesus did just that. An interesting parallel with Jesus is the prophet Jeremiah. How many would say they believe that Jeremiah preexisted his birth? The Bible states that God knew Jeremiah before he was formed in the womb of his mother (Jer. 1:5). How are we to understand this existence prior to birth? Was it a literal existence or was it existence in the foreknowledge of God?

It is very helpful to recognize and understand that, in Jewish thought processes, people and things that God has planned are thought of as preexisting their actuality. For example, the Jews believed that Moses, the Temple and the Torah all preexisted, that is existed in the foreknowledge of God.

I Corinthians 10:4 "And all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a



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spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.” This is supposed to prove that Jesus was alive and active at the time of the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, approximately 1,500 years before his birth.

Paul is here alluding to two incidents involving the wandering of the Israelites in the wilderness after their exodus from Egypt. The first incident is recorded in Exodus 17:1-6. The people were thirsty and God commanded Moses to strike a rock. When he did water came out. Paul uses this as a type of Jesus being struck for our sins and providing believers with the Holy Spirit to sustain us.

The second incident is recorded in Numbers 20:1-12. The people again complained of being thirsty. Moses was instructed to speak to the rock but Moses disobeyed and struck it instead. Paul uses this incident as a type of Jesus. The resurrected Jesus will not be struck down again and should be approached verbally through prayer to supply the Holy Spirit.

The wandering of the Israelites may also be seen as a type of the believer’s spiritual journey through this age to eternal life, which is life in the Kingdom

of God in the age to come. In light of other scriptural evidence, and the fact that Paul is clearly speaking in spiritual terms of Old Testament types or examples (I Cor. 10:11), there is no reason to assume that Jesus was actually present with the Israelites.

II Corinthians 8:9 “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.” This verse says nothing about Jesus divesting himself of his preexisting “rich God nature” and coming to earth in some “poor Mediterranean human nature.” It also has nothing to do with Jesus being wealthy as some prosperity preachers claim. F.B. Craddock warns, “We should not assume that the contrast is between spiritual wealth (preexistence) and spiritual poverty (incarnation).”⁴

What Paul has in mind here is the unique human being whom God raised up to be king of Israel, and the whole world, not exercising his right to reign. He did not claim the privileges of kingship during his first advent. Instead he obediently implemented God’s plan by living humbly, experiencing the sufferings of

life. He didn’t prosper financially from preaching the gospel or pursuing a business career. He labored and suffered to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom and those who respond to his message will become rich, not with material things destined to wear out and be destroyed, but with life in the age to come.

The issue of the preexistence of Jesus is complicated and far too large a topic to cover exhaustively in this paper. We have briefly addressed only a few of the most commonly quoted verses voiced by those who espouse belief in Jesus’ preexistence. I would like to conclude with a few quotes for your consideration from several scholars.

“In short, it is not sufficiently probable that I Cor. 10:4 refers to Christ as preexistent for us to make anything of it in our inquiry.”⁵

“If II Cor. 8:9 and Phil. 2:6-11 had been penned in the middle of the second century there would be little dispute that the writer was thinking of Christ as a preexistent divine being – the context of thought, including particularly the myth of Primal Man-redemer, would make that clear. But these passages were written in the middle of the first century, and



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the most obvious and only real context of thought to inform their meaning is the Adam theology and Christology widespread in earliest Christianity.”⁶

“It would certainly go beyond our evidence to conclude that the author [of the book of Hebrews] has attained to the understanding of God’s Son as having had a real personal preexistence. In short, a concept of preexistent sonship yes; but the preexistence perhaps more of an idea and purpose in the mind of God than of a personal divine being.”⁷

“The Logos becoming incarnate – that could be said to move still within the thought world of the Wisdom hymns in Colossians and Hebrews.”⁸

“Closer examination of the terminology used [in Philippians 2:6-11] shows that hymnic language does not allow for metaphysical or systematic theological conclusions.”⁹

“This is not a statement on preexistence and incarnation [I Peter 1:20], but a variant of the ‘hidden-revealed’ pattern found in the writings of Paul and his school; the emphasis is on the fact that God’s agelong

intention [plan] has now been realized, in Christ, ‘for your sake.’”¹⁰

“Nor do we find any interest [on the part of early Christians] in questions of ‘essence’ or ‘modes of existence’ of Jesus Christ (or God for that matter) like those raised by Greek theologians of later centuries, influenced by contemporary philosophical discussions.”¹¹

“Philosophically trained theologians differed widely in their conclusions [concerning the interpretation of John 1:1-18], and we may argue that the great dogmas of the Trinity and the two natures of Christ circumscribe the central mystery rather than define it.”¹²

Jesus was always in the plan and purpose of God. This may be termed ideal preexistence, an existence that was planned but not yet accomplished. Jesus experienced a real birth, a genesis, a coming into being, a beginning. He came into actual existence, no longer just in the thought and plan of God, when he was born in Bethlehem 2000 years ago.

When we comprehend that Jesus did not literally preexist his birth, that he is not God the Son but rather the Son of God,

as Scripture plainly teaches, then and only then can we fully understand and believe such verses as Deuteronomy 6:4 and I Corinthians 8:6. There is only one God and He is the Father of the unique human being Jesus.

¹ Abridged in One Volume, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 1990, pg. 118

² Ibid., pg. 114

³ Ibid., pg. 505

⁴ I Corinthians 10:11

⁵ As quoted by James D. G. Dunn, Christology in the Making, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 1996, Second Edition, pg. 121

⁶ Ibid., pg. 184

⁷ Ibid., pg. 125

⁸ Ibid., pg. 55 - 56

⁹ Ibid., pg. 263

¹⁰ Marinus de Jonge, Christology in Context, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1988, pg. 197

¹¹ Ibid., pg. 135

¹² Ibid., pg. 190

¹³ Ibid., pg. 199



What Is the Reason for the Season?

Brian K. Froehlich

We just passed "The Jesus Season," to coin a phrase. It is the time of year when nearly everyone is thinking about the advent and remembering the birth of Christ. It happens each year. After gorging themselves on turkey and dressing, thousands rush off to snatch up bargains — keepsakes that will captivate their loved ones' hearts on December 25th, or perhaps, if they are unable to wait, the night before. Little fingers open tiny windows of paper, cardboard, or wood to reveal tiny chocolates and other trinkets. Then, children adorned in bathrobes keep watch over their fields by night. A spot-lit choir, in white and wearing wings, tells them "do not be afraid." Ceramic wise men ride into stables on brightly painted camels. Mary, although just a figurine, always seems to have a glow about her as Joseph feebly leans on his little cane and they both stare glassy-eyed at the scantily clothed infant in the feeding trough. Signs hang in churches and homes with catchy phrases like "Jesus is the Reason for the Season." Then, on the last night of December people stay up late to see an electronic ball of light slide down a pole in the midst of a colossal crowd of people shivering to death. Some wonder, "Might this be the night he returns?"

The snow eventually melts

away just like thoughts about the birth of Jesus. Before long, Easter comes around, and everyone hides pastel dyed chicken eggs from their children to help them remember the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. A lot of people decorate their sanctuaries and homes with the murder weapon, the cross. In one church a banner hangs in the front of the sanctuary which reads "He paid the debt for all"; it bears the image of a cross, and there is another cross beside it on the wall. Preachers, sounding like they have just run a marathon and cannot quite catch their breath, gasp out "Thank you Lord for the cross . . . Thank you Lord for the Blood! Thank you for dying on the cross to pay for our sins." It all seems somewhat meaningless.

We should ask ourselves if the *person* of Jesus or the cross he died on are really reason for celebration? Did his death really pay for our sins? What was it that the Jews were looking forward to in the first advent? What is it that we are really looking forward to when we say we are Adventists? It is much deeper than orthodoxy will ever admit. People of almost every age and race have been deceived into believing partial truth mixed with paganism. A study of the Synoptic Gospels, that is, the books of Matthew, Mark and

Luke, begins to reveal the infinite levels of significance and meaning behind the obedient life and resurrection of Jesus Christ. By confining our thanks to God to the cross and His son's death, we do a tremendous injustice. We should remember and more greatly emphasize and give thanks for Jesus' birth, life and resurrection, look at how they prove he was the promised Messiah and rejoice in the hope that gives us. Should we perhaps hesitate to proclaim that it was merely or mostly Jesus' *death* or *blood* which paid for our sins? Should our better focus be looking forward to the return of Christ to establish the Kingdom on earth?

First, we should remember Jesus' birth, life, and resurrection and celebrate them because they proved that he was the promised Messiah. This gives us hope for a future resurrection ourselves, and life under a perfect government system, the Kingdom. We should not merely remember the man Jesus being born, or the fact that he died or even the specific manner in which he died. In the Synoptic Gospels we see a couple of different accounts of Jesus' lowly birth, gruesome death, and resurrection. These books are all called synoptic *gospels* even though not all of them contain the same exact



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accounts of stories or even in some cases the same stories at all. Taking a bit of liberty in applying this, one might say that the gospel is hardly about the historical events at all, but mainly about how the people and events affected that time and how, if at all, they are still relevant today. Take for instance Martin Luther King Day, which is celebrated in the United States in January. It is not merely the birthday of a man, or the fact that a good man died, or even that he was murdered by a gun, that we celebrate. Or in the words of John P. Meier in his book *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*:

Imagine for instance, a black college student writing a thesis on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The young scholar might be quite careful in researching the facts; but the figure of King could never be for that student simply a datum embalmed in the past. Inevitably, the student would select, arrange, and underscore certain data insofar as they seemed to speak to the problems and promises of today. In principle this distinction of

historical and historic can be applied to Jesus just as much as any other great personage in the past.¹

In other words, students do not dryly study a person. They look at what a person did and see how those actions apply to current issues. When we celebrate Martin Luther King Day we are celebrating and remembering what that man did for our African-American brothers and sisters' civil rights. We are remembering his effort to bring people together in peace. We remember how before that man's life, many aspects of our country were unfair and even dangerous for black people, and we honor him because of how many things are better because of his life.

Christmas, as well as Easter and other "Jesus Season" holidays, should be similar. Jesus was born into some of the worst conditions possible for the delivery of a baby — a dirty stable. Similarly, we are born into a world of sin and we must overcome that indecent condition. We should not merely celebrate a person, Jesus, being born. We should celebrate what Jesus lived for, and be thankful for his obedience unto death. We should rejoice in the truth

that through an obedient man being raised to life we, if obedient, also have hope of a resurrection into a perfect life in the Kingdom of God. 1 Peter 1:3-4 reads, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade."

Second, perhaps we should be leery of concluding that it was merely or mostly Jesus' blood or death that paid for our sin. The simple fact that there existed a man named Jesus or the reality of his death itself, I would venture to say, did hardly anything for us *in and of itself*. It is simply true that he had to first be dead in order to be resurrected. The method in which Jesus was killed was one of the most painful and awful deaths that anyone could think of inflicting on someone. Jesus was put to the ultimate test of obedience to his father when God asked him to die in this way.

The father did not send his son into the world to die on the cross. Only a monstrous God would do such a thing. The



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father sent his son to proclaim the depth of the Father's love and the realization of that love in a kingdom of transforming grace. The human response to this divine initiative was twofold. On the part of Jesus, it was to remain faithful (obedient) to the mission given him even unto death. On the part of his enemies, it was to reject the divine initiative and crucify God's beloved son. Thus, it was not God who created the cross but human beings.²

Even one admittedly pagan writer, Dr. Gus DiZerga, corroborated this point when he said:

If Satan is God's implacable enemy, he should have sought at all costs to have Jesus die of old age. If Jesus had died naturally, the standard theology would suggest we could not now be saved, for according to most Christian views it took Jesus' death as some sort of sacrifice to make God's forgiveness of our sins possible. Otherwise there was no point to

it. What greater blow to God could Satan give? If Satan is ruler of "this world" he certainly had the power to save Jesus' life. Doing so would indefinitely perpetuate the bad effects of the Fall...It is no longer the case that just because a religion is not focused on Jesus it must be satanic.³

This is an interesting twist on things. To paraphrase what Dr. DiZerga said, if the cross and/or blood had anything to do with salvation, or if the death on the cross was a kind of sacrificial death that paid for people's way out of condemnation, then why would Satan have joined the effort to have Jesus killed in that manner?

As we can clearly ascertain from the story, beginning in Luke 22:3, "Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the twelve." Satan was involved with Judas.

Continuing on in Matthew 26:3-4 we see that the chief priests' intentions were clear: they wanted to kill Jesus. "Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and they plotted to arrest Jesus in some sly way and kill him." Yet in Matthew 26:14-16 we

can see that the same man, Judas, who had some kind of encounter with Satan apparently even entering his person, had no qualms about dealing with these men. "Then one of the twelve — the one called Judas Iscariot — went to the chief priests and asked, 'What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?' So they counted out for him thirty silver coins. From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over." If that is not convincing enough, it is easily proven that Satan wanted Simon to be a part of the effort to betray and/or kill Jesus as well. Jesus himself said in Luke 22:31-32, "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

If the death or blood of Christ paid for our sins would it not have been Satan's desire to extend Jesus' life or at least end it in a less bloody manner? The answer is obvious. Jesus' death on a cross and the spilling of blood did not *in and of itself* directly pay for anything. Just like Abraham and Noah who were obedient, and through obedience brought blessings upon themselves and hope of life to others, Jesus' obedience, not



What Is the Reason for the Season?

Brian K. Froehlich

the spilling of blood, is what brought salvation from death to Jesus, and it is what gives us hope that if we are obedient, through faith in God and in Christ's obedience, resurrection and Kingship, we might have salvation from the eternal clutches of death.

Finally, we should be looking forward to the return of Christ to establish the Kingdom on earth. That is what the Jews were looking for the Messiah to do. That was the focus of the first advent according to Beatrice Bruteau, author of *Jesus through Jewish Eyes*. Ms. Bruteau comments, "As a Jew I do not believe in original sin and have no need for a messiah's redemption. As a Jew I continue to await the coming of a Messiah whose kingdom is of this world, and who will do what the prophets said he would do: bring peace to Israel and the world." She goes on to say:

Given all of this, do I believe it is worthwhile for Jews to study Jesus? Not only worthwhile, but vital. Jesus is the most famous Jew who ever lived. To ignore him or to allow others to lift him out of his Jewishness and historical context in order to define him as

a god-man is to give up an important part of our legacy as Jews.⁴

There really is no second advent. There is only one. The Jews were looking forward to it 2000 years ago and beyond and are still looking forward to it today. The Jews at large missed their opportunity to recognize a person rising from the dead and the hope that that gives them but they are diligently looking forward to a kingdom on this earth. It is important to keep obediently looking forward to the kingdom, to have an Abrahamic Faith and remember that, just as the Synoptic Gospels tell us through the story of Jesus' birth and resurrection, and Galatians 3:29 says so beautifully, "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Even if our bodies are murdered and destroyed in the most gruesome way possible, we have a wonderful hope of resurrection into a perfect everlasting life in the Kingdom of God.

In closing, there is a lot of confusion in this world of ours. The birth, death, and resurrection of Christ are often trivialized and mocked by our society. We should remember Jesus' birth, life and resurrection, looking at how

they prove he was the promised Messiah, and rejoice in the hope of a resurrection that gives us. Perhaps it was not merely or mostly Jesus' death or blood which paid for our sins, and maybe we should avoid using terminology and catch phrases like that. We should be looking forward to the return of Christ to establish the Kingdom on earth. That is the reason for the season.

¹ John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, New York: Doubleday Dell, 1991, pp. 26-27.

² Michael L. Cook, *Responses to 101 Questions about Jesus*, Mahwah, NJ: Society of Jesus, 1993, pp. 72-73.

³ Gus DiZerga, *Pagans and Christians*, St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 2001, p. 126.

⁴ Beatrice Bruteau, *Jesus through Jewish Eyes*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001, p. 169.



God Is Universal

Tom Colburn

God is universal. Salvation is not.

In the late 80's I had the dubious honor of owning a Yugo — you know, those disposable Fiat wannabes from Yugoslavia. Perhaps you saw them on the news — those little, boxy cars they used as catapult missiles during the Yugoslavian war. Mine was brand new and financed for four years. You can tell right away I was a financial success story.

Not too long afterwards my boss bought a brand new Cadillac STS, loaded to the teeth with options. Right after Yugos first came out, there was a Cadillac dealer giving away a new Yugo with the purchase of any Caddy. How humiliating.

The two cars were just a picture of contrast. We sat in his car and soaked up the smell of new leather. I love the smell of a new car, but a new, leather-seated Cadillac, oh my! The Yugo just smelled.

My car was brand new so I'm not sure if the box they shipped it over in perhaps had some old shoes in it

before or what, but it didn't smell like any new car I'd ever been in! Anyway, it was four on the floor, shifted like a tractor and rode like the back of a Toyota pickup. But it was mine, and it outlasted the loan (by a few months) before requiring any repairs, and then it self-destructed. I begged some guy to give me \$300 and get it out of my driveway.

Anyway, there is one thing these two cars had in common. They both got us where we were going. Our respective destinations were the same. Work. Which translated into income, which put food on our tables. Our sustenance and in a sense our salvation.

Our transportation to God is multifarious. While I believe there is but one God and one truth, I balance that with my belief that God is omniscient (all-knowing), omnipotent (all-powerful), and omnipresent (everywhere at once). God works in ways, in places and through people you and I can scarcely imagine.

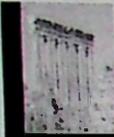
There was a time in history when God had a literal, localized, chosen people, a

nation of God. It was to be through these Hebrew people that God intended primarily to shine His light to the world. But that source of light, in that state of existence, never shone universally. But God shone universally even then.

In John 14:6, Jesus says, "I am the way, and the Truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me" (NASB). What is Jesus truly saying here?

Let's consider another passage where our master, savior and King speaks. "I can do nothing on my own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I do not seek my own will, but the will of Him who sent me" (John 5:30, NASB).

Who is really doing the speaking? Who is really the Truth? I mean ultimately, or originally of eternity? Our Father, the only one who is God. The Father (God) is the "Him" who sent Jesus. God is the One who speaks when Jesus hears. God is the Truth and our Life. And it is this Truth only which provides the "Way" home to God.



God Is Universal

Tom Colburn

In these two passages (and in many other places in Scripture), Jesus' words reveal an important reality. Jesus is only the "way, truth and life" to the extent (and because) he speaks the Father's Truth and does the Father's will. Like the light of the moon, Jesus reflects a greater light; he is not the origin of that Light. As Biblical unitarians, it's not hard to lose sight of this truth.

Does this reality in any way diminish the importance and magnificence of Jesus? God forbid. But it should open our eyes to the universal presence and thus possibilities of God.

Do you believe that God can speak to someone without the Bible? If you revere Scripture your answer is an absolute yes. Consider Romans 1:20: "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — His eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."

How about these passages?
"Now hear this, O foolish

and senseless people, who have eyes but do not see; who have ears but do not hear . . .

"But now ask the beasts, and let them teach you; and the birds of the heavens, and let them tell you. Or speak to the earth, and let it teach you; and let the fish of the sea declare to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this . . .

"The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands" (Jer. 5:21; Job 12:7-9; Ps. 19:1, NASB).

Ultimately, we humans need to accept God, His Truth, and His will for us. God still primarily uses His people (us) to spread His Truth, but let's not assume that God isn't working where Christians never tread.

I've been discussing mission work both in college class here at Atlanta Bible College and elsewhere. It occurred to me that so often the talk is to bring the Truth to "God-forsaken" places (don't get me wrong, our instructors

aren't putting it this way). But I'm forced to wonder as I consider my omnipresent God, where could such a place exist? God is everywhere, so whether we travel 10,000 miles away or do our mission work with our neighbor next door, the first best assumption is that God is already there. Our job is to do in part what Jesus did to perfection. Reflect God's existing Light. Build on His presence. And always remember, Jesus is our King, but God is our ultimate destination.



A Sabbath Day in America in 1831

Alexis de Tocqueville

Is It The Same Today? De Tocqueville analyzed the virtues of the American system in the 1830s along with the pitfalls lying in its path – a remarkably perceptive account of American institutions, government and politics as can be read in Democracy in America, 2 vols. Below is an excerpt on religion – Pastor Rex Cain.

In the United States, on the seventh day of every week, the trading and working life of the nation seems suspended; all noises cease; a deep tranquility, say rather the solemn calm of meditation, succeeds the turmoil of the week, and the soul resumes possession and contemplation of itself. Upon this

day the marts of traffic are deserted; every member of the community, accompanied by his children, goes to church, where he listens to strange language which would seem unsuited to his ear. He is told of the countless evils caused by pride and covetousness: he is reminded of the necessity of checking his desires, of the finer pleasures that belong to virtue alone, and of the true happiness that attends it.

On his return home, he does not turn to the ledgers of his calling, but he opens the book of Holy Scripture. There he meets with sublime or affecting descriptions of the greatness and goodness of the Creator, of the infinite magnificence

of the handiwork of God, of the lofty destinies of man, of his duties, and of his immortal privileges. Thus it is that the American at times steals an hour from himself; and laying aside for a while the petty passions which agitate his life, and the ephemeral interests which engross it, he strays at once into an ideal world, where all is great, eternal, and pure. [Words by Alexis DeTocqueville / Democracy in America, Oxford University Press, 1947, edited by Henry Steele Commager]



How Long is a “Yom”?

Allon Maxwell

There is often great confusion about what is meant by the word “DAY” in Genesis Chapters 1 and 2. Part of this confusion arises from geologists who interpret the “geological evidence” which they claim to find in the rocks, as “proof” of great age for the earth. Often this can be as much as 4500 MILLION years!

However, we should also be aware that today there is a very great volume of published literature from “young earth” geologists who

present very logical sounding arguments as to why the speculations of the “long age experts” about the “evidence” may be completely wrong! For unskilled laymen, the scientific discussions about the geology may often be quite unintelligible. However the Creation story, as told in the first few chapters of Genesis, is written in very simple language. We are being told that the work was accomplished in six literal “earth-days,” each with an evening and a morning! And it is easy to see that this “young

earth” interpretation of the geological data fits the language of Genesis far better than the “long age” version.

THE MEANING OF THE HEBREW WORD “YOM”

The attempt to accommodate the Scriptures to fit “long age speculations” tends to revolve around the meaning of the Hebrew word “yom” (usually translated “day,” meaning a literal earth day — but occasionally with other meanings such as “time,” “daily,” “year,” etc.)



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You don’t need to be a Hebrew Scholar to use a Strong’s or Young’s Concordance to study the use of the word. But there are serious problems when amateurs insist that they have conclusively proved *from Scripture* that the Genesis days are *not* literal “earth-day” 24 hour periods, but much longer times. Depending on who you hear it from, speculation about *that* ranges from “1000-year days” to “long-age days” of millions, or even billions of years.

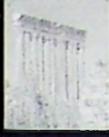
Of course, it is certainly true that there are places in the Bible where the word “yom” clearly does not mean a literal “earth-day” of 24 hours. That is no different from our own language. English also sometimes uses “day” that way. There is even *one* place where that is true in Genesis chapter 2. (See Gen 2:4) But that does *not* logically follow that *all* the other “days” of Genesis are *not* “earth-days”!

The context in the Genesis creation story seems to point us clearly to literal “earth-days.” (“The evening and the morning were the first day,” etc.) And there are things described there that become very confusing if the days are not “earth-days,” e.g.: How did the trees, shrubs, grass, and flowers, pollinate and reproduce for all those millions of years, without the sun until the “long age fourth day”; or without the bees and birds who transfer the pollen, until the fifth “day”; or without the animals through whose digestive systems some seeds must pass in order to germinate, until the sixth “day”?

“YOM” IN EXODUS 20:8-11 and 31:12-17.

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates.”

Clearly these days in Exodus are “earth-days” of 24 hours each! In the context, *nothing* else will do! Shall we then



The Children's Page

The Magic Carpet

Mary A. Gesin

Reprinted from The Restitution Herald, Aug. 18, 1936

Many of you girls and boys enjoy reading fairy tales. While you know they are not true and the things that happen cannot possibly come about, yet they are often interesting and exciting. Today we are going to read a fairy tale of our own.

It is about a magic carpet that takes those who stand upon it wherever they need to go. Across the stormy seas, over the rough mountain trails to distant lands this carpet carries the men who preach the gospel. Doesn't it sound inviting?

Now this magic carpet comes from a very peculiar thing, which doesn't look at all like a carpet. Can you guess what it is? Well, it's a collection plate!

Yes, the plate that is passed to you in church and Sunday school! And now some of you may be wondering how a collection plate can possibly turn into a magic carpet. Well, I'll tell you. It's this way.

The pennies and nickels, dimes and dollars that you put into the collection plate help take our preachers into different places to preach the gospel to those who need it. When you put some of your money into the collection you are, in a way, stepping upon the magic carpet. For you are helping send another who has learned how to preach and teach God's Word to these distant lands.

Doesn't it thrill you to think that *you*, no matter how small and unimportant you may seem to be, are helping to send the glad news of God's coming King to some of the sad people of this world? Don't you feel honored to think that God planned some way in which even the smallest of us may help in His great work?

The way He has planned is for you to give part of the money you have to spend so that the magic carpet will not wear out. If you have only ten cents, you can help by giving one cent of it. If you have a dollar you can help by giving ten cents, or more if you are really interested.

Don't think that God doesn't notice that you are helping spread His gospel. He notices every effort, even though it may be very small and He rewards every effort, too.

Let us see what one of the greatest preachers that ever lived was doing. There was a man who went with this preacher, Paul, and he was a wealthy man. He gave a great deal of his money to keep the magic carpet going. His name was Barnabas.

God selected this man to help Paul, and the church at Antioch was glad to send him, even if they knew they would miss him very much. For he was a good man and one who did all he could for the church.

Paul and Barnabas started out on foot from Antioch to the seaport. About sixteen miles it was, but they didn't think anything of that. When they reached the sea they set sail to an island, over eighty miles away, the island where Barnabas was born.

On this island, Cyprus, were many mountains where copper was mined. Fine vases, pottery of all kinds, were made there, too. Living on this island were many Jews who believed in God, but not in Jesus. So Paul had plenty of work to do there.

Salamis was the name of the first place they went ashore. They found several synagogues at this place where they preached the gospel.

There isn't much said about the

results of their work, except that John helped them.

From there they went to the other side of the island one hundred miles away, preaching at points on the way. No doubt Barnabas found many old-time friends on his journey, and relatives, too, perhaps. Also before this some had fled to Cyprus because of fear after Stephen had been stoned. And we know that they told everyone they met about Jesus.

When they reached Paphos they had a very interesting and unusual experience with a false prophet. You may read about it in Acts 13: 6-12. Sergius Paulus, one of the officers of the island, was an educated man, but he believed in magic. You remember, at the beginning of our story we said some of us like to read about magic, but we know better than to believe it.

Well, Elymas was the magician, and he didn't like to see his master, Sergius Paulus, converted to Christ because then he, Elymas, would lose his job. But Paul saw through his tricks and put blindness upon him for a punishment.

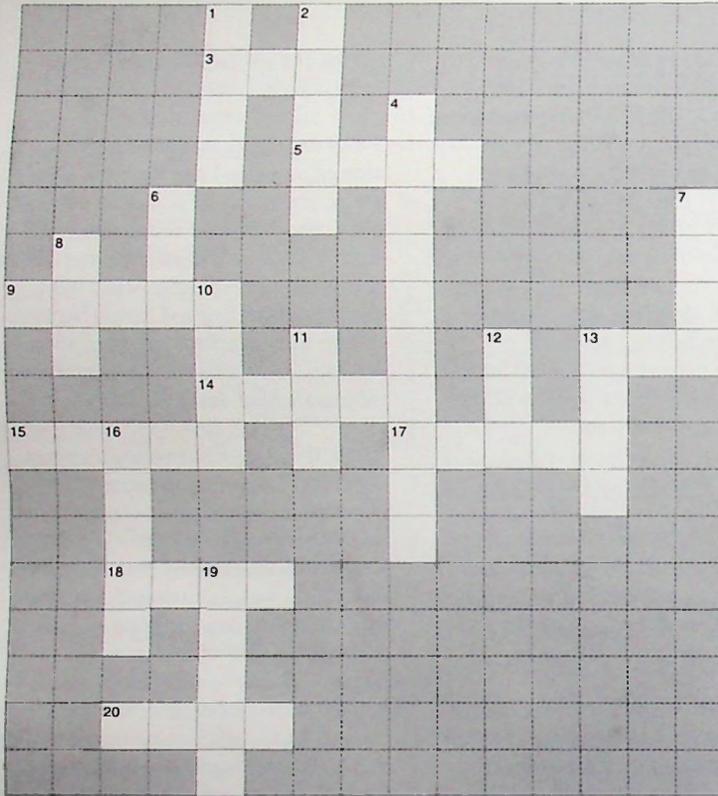
Now read verse 12, and see what effect this had on Sergius Paulus. He believed, it says, being astonished at the teachings of Paul. He had been listening to those dreadful teachings of Elymas so long that he didn't know there was so much love and joy in the world.

Through the magic carpet we spoke of, this is one way you can help spread this joy and love in the world.



Creation Crossword

The Restitution Herald



Across

- 3. Adam blamed her (Gen. 3:12)
- 5. Garden planted by God (Gen. 2:8)
- 9. Flying creatures made on Day Five (Gen. 1:21)
- 13. Crouched at Cain's door (Gen. 4:7)
- 14. We're made in God's _____ (Gen. 6:21)
- 15. Father of those who live in tents (Gen. 4:20)
- 17. Created on Day One (Gen. 1:3)
- 18. Eat from this tree and live forever (Gen. 3:22)
- 20. Noah needed a lot of this in the ark (Gen. 6:21)

Down

- 1. Eve's offspring would crush Satan's _____ (Gen. 3:15)
- 2. When God will destroy the earth by flood again (Gen. 9:11)
- 4. Oldest Man - 969 years (Gen. 5:27)
- 6. Supreme being (Gen. 1:1)
- 7. Eve's first curse (Gen. 3:16)
- 8. Eve made from this (Gen. 2:22)
- 10. What Cain worked (Gen. 4:3)
- 11. made in God's image (Gen. 1:26)
- 12. Size of Noah's ark (Gen. 6:15)
- 13. An Abel replacement (Gen. 4:25)
- 16. Snake crawls on this (Gen. 3:14)
- 19. How God looked on Abel's offering (Gen. 4:5)

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The Restitution Herald

Volume 92 Number 4

April, May 2000



What Christians
Should Do
In Times of

war

Also in this Issue:

- The Conversion of Osama bin Laden
- Christians in Uniform
- U.S. "Draws Line in Sand"
- A Family Bible Study
- Easter Crossword



Editorial



"You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" (Matthew 24:6-7 NASB).

We are at war in the Middle East at the time of this writing. Anti-war demonstrations such as have not been seen since the Vietnam War have been held not only in the United States, but throughout the world. The United States - indeed even the world - is sharply divided over the morality of military force against the present Iraqi regime.

As our attention is focused on this present conflict and crisis, students of Bible prophesy search with renewed interest to discern if these current Middle Eastern events are forementioned in the Scriptures. I personally remember well my own studies in Daniel 11 and other related passages during the last Iraqi war. I was intrigued with the possibility that the Iraqi tyrant that we were fighting might actually be the "Assyrian" of Bible prophecy. I even had a sense of disappointment as the Persian Gulf war proved to be a short-lived skirmish rather than a prelude to Armageddon.

Once again we are poised to do battle with the same Iraqi leader. As with the Persian Gulf War, this may again be a short skirmish. But it might be the start of something more, with ominous prophetic implications. It is left to the student of the Bible to watch, and

pray, and carefully discern these present-day events in light of Bible prophecy.

I remember skimming an article in the General Conference Archives written prior to World War I in which the writer was commenting on the Ottoman Empire and its prophetic significance. While we might tend to dismiss such musings today, future generations (should the Lord's coming yet be in the distant future) may similarly view our observations of the present Middle East crisis. We may well be viewing events that are foretold in the Bible, but we may also be straining and stretching present events to fit Bible prophecies that have been made concerning events and times that are yet future to us.

We know with certainty a characteristic of this present age, according to the words of Jesus, are "wars and rumors of war." We may be on the threshold of Armageddon but we may just as easily be in the midst of a series of military conflicts that will culminate in Armageddon in the distant future - perhaps beyond the lifetimes of all who read this.

Whether there is prophetic significance in present events or not, there are moral issues that challenge the follower of Jesus. Should a Christian serve in the military? Are there "just wars" that should be fought? Does a Christian have the right and responsibility to speak out in favor or opposition to war?

We recognize that there are strong convictions and opinions by many of

our readers on these issues. And while it is not our intent to stir up controversy and division, it is our desire to stimulate the thinking of our readers. For this reason we have included articles written both from a pacifist perspective as well as from the perspective of a Christian's right to serve in the military. We do not endorse either view because the Church of God General Conference has historically supported both the believer's right to serve in the military as well as the believer's right to choose to be a conscientious objector:

"Whereas This Church of God does not profess a creed, other than the Bible, by or according to which it receives or controls its members, and therefore cannot declare, as a matter of denominational creed, as to military service of its membership."
(Resolution passed by the General Conference of the Church of God, August 17, 1922)

This issue of the Restitution Herald, as with all issues, may contain viewpoints that do not represent official positions of the Church of God General Conference. As is always the case, the reader is strongly encouraged to measure everything written against the standard of personal Bible interpretation (Acts 17:11).

While war and conflict characterize this present age, we who look forward to The Age To Come anticipate an unprecedented period of peace and prosperity on earth under the direct leadership of Jesus Christ. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

Steve Taylor
Director of Communications
Church of God General Conference

- *Pastor Jeff Fletcher will be resuming duties as editor of the Restitution Herald with the June/July issue.*



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EDITOR
JEFF FLETCHER

PUBLISHING SPECIALIST
JUSTIN TAYLOR

PROOFREADER
SARAH BUZZARD

MAILING AND SUBSCRIPTIONS
MARCY CLY

ADDRESS EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE TO:
THE RESTITUTION HERALD, ATTN: JEFF FLETCHER, 130
WAYNE ST., PONCHATOULA, LA 70454. E-mail:
happywoodseg@i-55.com

ADDRESS MAILING AND SUBSCRIPTION CORRESPONDENCE TO:
THE RESTITUTION HERALD, ATTN: MARCY CLY,
P. O. BOX 100,000, MORROW, GA 30260 (E-MAIL
ADDRESS: info@abc-cogc.org).

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- THE ONENESS OF GOD (1 COR. 8:6);
 - THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S POWER (ACTS 1:8);
 - JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT. 16:16), AND IS OUR MEDIATOR (1 TIM. 2:5);
 - THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16);
 - THE MORTALITY OF MAN (JOB 4:17; PSA. 146:4);
 - THE NEAR RETURN OF CHRIST (ACTS 1:11), AND LIFE ONLY THROUGH HIM (COL. 3:3);
 - THE LITERAL RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (JOHN 5:28);
 - THE IMMORTALIZATION OF THOSE IN CHRIST (1 COR. 15:53, 54);
 - THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (REV. 21:8);
 - THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32);
 - THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1-3);
 - THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21);
 - IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.



Christian Duty In Wartime

Brian K. Wright

About the Author:

Brian Wright is a member of the Restoration Church of God in Fayetteville, GA. Brian presents the pacifist view on Christian's involvement with war pre-second Advent.

As I write these words (February 24, 2003), the United States is preparing for conflict in the Middle East. War with Iraq appears imminent and may have commenced by the time you read this.

President Bush is seeking support from the United Nations for a coalition of nations to forcibly disarm the Iraqi dictator. World opinion, including that of the American public, is split on whether to support or oppose this action.

The president has made it abundantly clear to his supporters and detractors that the United States government will hunt down and destroy her enemies and that democracy will triumph over evil. Vengeance is ours, saith the president.

In discussing the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar created and required his subjects to bow down and worship (Dan. 3), G.H. Lang¹ observes that the image represents the state. He adds, "To honour it was to honour

him [Nebuchadnezzar], and by requiring all men to worship the image, the State, he secured that they should worship himself."² Lang refers to this as "the fascination of hero worship."³

Hero worship of the head of state is clearly visible today in nations governed by dictators. It is also present in other forms of government but not as overtly. In "free" nations the state is worshipped through appeal to patriotism (love and pride for one's nation) for the heroic exploits of generals, soldiers, astronauts, firefighters, etc. in service to the nation. Free or not, patriotism fosters an attitude of "we are great" versus "they are not."

Lang points out that hero worship is a constant feature of history and provides an example from his own time to illustrate the point. Some readers may find my application of the illustration offensive. It is not my intention to imply, nor is it my belief, that the morals, ethics or ambitions of the world leader in the illustration are characteristic of our president.

Listen carefully to the quotation Lang cites from an article that appeared in the *London Times* on July 29, 1936:

"One cannot be a good German and at the same time deny God, but an avowal of faith in the eternal Germany is at the same time an avowal of faith in the eternal God. If we act as true Germans we act according to the laws of God. Whoever serves Adolf Hitler, the Fuhrer, serves Germany, and whoever serves Germany serves God."⁴

The citizenry of Nazi Germany was seduced by an emotional appeal to patriotism, skillfully manipulated by their government, and persuaded to serve the "noble" goals of the state. While this abuse is repugnant to us, isn't there a disturbing parallel happening today? Can you hear the echo of patriotism and the equating of service to God with service to the state in the political speeches of both the Iraqi dictator and our own president, as they rally the support of their people?

The president governs a people of great religious diversity. He has appealed for citizens of all religious faiths to bond together in a united patriotic cause against a common enemy. To hold such a group together, emphasis must be placed on the preservation of the state while allowing everyone to serve the god of his or her faith. This of course implies that the state is greater



Christian Duty In Wartime

Brian K. Wright

than personal religious beliefs, including personal reservations about killing fellow human beings.

Christians should find this troubling.

How will the president go about persuading troubled Christians to support his call to arms? Lang observes, "the common argument used to persuade Christians to join in war is that the other country is in the wrong, is acting unrighteously, and it is a sacred duty to resist the wrong."⁵ Sounds familiar, doesn't it?

The secular government cleverly appeals to the deep-seated human, especially Christian, psyche concerning righteousness and unrighteousness. Christians strive to be righteous while at the same time desiring the unrighteous to be punished. We are disturbed by the idea that the unrighteous enjoy the fruit of their wickedness while the righteous suffer. We tend to be impatient with our longsuffering God and seek to take matters into our own hands. How easy it is for us to rationalize that we are serving God by punishing the unrighteous.

Is it really the sacred duty of a Christian to "resist the wrong"

by killing our enemies? Evangelical Christian radio and television broadcasters are answering this question in the affirmative. They ask their listeners to pray for our president and our soldiers. Give us victory, they say, so that we may liberate the oppressed and bring them the benefits of democracy. Proudly and defiantly fly the American flag, honk your car horn, light a candle and never ever forget September 11. Cue the fireworks, strike up the band and let the unrighteous reap what they have sown.

It all sounds so appealing to our human nature. But it doesn't sound like Jesus.

Jesus instructed His disciples (not unbelieving world rulers) about how they should react to persecution. "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matt. 5:44-45). How can a Christian participate in war and at the same time be obedient to Jesus' instruction?

Jesus commissioned His disciples to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation" (Mark 16:15).

The Christian's duty is to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God, not to spread democracy.

Is it possible for a Christian to preach the gospel with a Bible in one hand and a rifle in the other? Can a Christian really persuade someone to believe the gospel while at the same time taking the life of a fellow human being?

Pacifist Christians are often berated and labeled as traitors. A popular argument goes something like this: "If the United States hadn't fought in World War II we would all be speaking German or Japanese today." Can you hear the national pride in this statement?

If God should allow our country to go into captivity, will it prevent Christians from carrying out the great commission to preach the gospel? If imprisoned will we not preach to our captors and fellow captives? If put to death will we not rest in the grave until Jesus returns and resurrects us to immortal life in the Kingdom of God?

Sometimes Christians are encouraged to join in warfare, often by other Christians, under the misguided notion that to do so is "rendering unto



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Caesar what is Caesar's" (Matt. 22:21). Often this argument is accompanied by an appeal to Paul's statement that "Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves" (Rom. 13:1-2).

What is often overlooked is that Paul says that God establishes *all* governments. Isn't it ironic that if the interpretation that we must kill if ordered to do so by the government is correct, then Paul is potentially requiring Christians to kill other Christians? Where did Jesus ever instruct the disciples to slay one another (or anyone else)? Rather, did He not say, "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another"? (John 13:35).

I recently watched a television program on the History Channel. I don't remember the name of the program but it made a lasting impression. The program documented the training of soldiers in the United States Marine Corps.

An imposing drill instructor coolly described his purpose as being "to turn men into killing machines." Is it conceivable that Jesus wants His disciples to be transformed into "killing machines"?

Lang eloquently summarizes the Christian duty as we wait for Jesus to return and establish the Kingdom of God on the earth. "What God requires of His own people in the meantime is not that we participate in the rule, ambitions, strife of world empires, but that, as foreigners in a world where His authority is not owned, we submit to present rulers as far as they demand nothing that a child of God may not do consistently with the highest duty to render unto God the things that are God's; that we endure patiently what may be inflicted by rulers when we are bound by conscience to refuse aught that they demand, and thus stand forth as witnesses to God and His rejected Messiah; that at all times we pray for rulers, and especially that we pray 'Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.'"⁶ To this I would add only that we should be actively engaged in preaching the gospel message to all mankind.

What is the Christian's duty in wartime? I submit for your

thoughtful consideration that it is exactly what the Christian's duty is in peacetime.

¹ G.H. Lang was born on November 20, 1874 in London, England and died on October 20, 1958 at Wimborne, Dorset, England. He was a prominent clergyman in the Plymouth Brethren movement.

² Lang, *The Histories and Prophecies of Daniel*, Kregel Publications, fourth edition, p. 39.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, statement made by Herr Bauldur von Schirach, Nazi Youth Leader.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁶ *The Histories and Prophecies of Daniel*, p. 36.



The Conversion of Osama bin Laden

David Krogh

About the Author:

David Krogh, former President of Atlanta Bible College & the Church of God General Conference, is presently the Registrar of Atlanta Bible College. David also serves as an elder at the Cornerstone Church of God in McDonough, GA. His article highlights the great hope man has, regardless of our current state of sinfulness, as "everyone is precious to God." Where there is life there is hope for repentance and salvation even for the worst of sinners.

What do you think is the likelihood that Osama bin Laden, Islamic fundamentalist and infamous terrorist, will become a zealous Christian? Most of us would think such a proposition is anywhere from extremely unlikely to ridiculously outrageous.

Last semester at Atlanta Bible College, I had the privilege of teaching a course on the book of Acts. I was reminded once again of the phenomenal conversion of Saul/Paul.

Saul was a zealous foot soldier in the Jewish campaign to stamp out followers of Jesus. In his own words, he describes his passion in life: "I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them" (Acts 26:9-11). "For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it" (Gal. 1:13). "I do not even

deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (1 Cor. 15:9).

Saul's mission in life was to terrorize Christians and destroy them. And he seems to have been very successful in his mission. Understandably, Christians feared this man, beginning with Ananias in Damascus (Acts 9:13) and continuing with the disciples in Jerusalem (9:26).

But Jesus confronted Saul on his way to Damascus and one of the most fantastic conversions in history took place. Saul, the zealous anti-Christian terrorist, became Paul, the dedicated Christian, missionary, teacher, and preacher. Saul, the one who had "cast his vote" to kill Christians, became Paul, who was responsible for the conversion of multitudes in the Middle East and in Europe.

Is there hope for Osama bin Laden? If Paul were here today, I think he would say "yes."

I have been praying for the conversion of bin Laden during the past year. On reflection, however, I have questioned my motives. Have I been praying for his conversion because I love him and want him to have eternal life, or have I been praying for him so that my country can be spared from further acts of terrorism? And I have to confess that my major motive is my fear of further acts of violence against the people of my country. I suspect that many other Americans, like me, have not been all that concerned about acts of terrorism that occurred over the years. when embassies in other countries have been blown up, or when U.S. diplomats have been randomly killed in remote places of the world, or when night clubs have been blown up in Bali with the loss of hundreds of lives.

But when terrorism comes to my own doorstep, then I become concerned.

But the truth of the matter is that I should care about the conversion of people everywhere because everyone is precious to God. God loves everyone and He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should be brought to repentance. Yes, I should love Osama because God loves him and because Jesus died for him. And so, yes, I should keep praying for him, and keep believing that his conversion is possible.

And while I am praying, I need to remember to pray for our government leaders who are making decisions about dealing with terrorism and war in Iraq — decisions that will have a tremendous impact on our lives and the lives of people all over the world. As I write this article in late January, it is far from clear what the next several months hold for us. It appears that war is inevitable, and though we are led to believe that it will be a brief war, with a certain victory, there are many uncertainties about the use of chemical weapons, dirty bombs, and further acts of terrorism.

Fortunately, our hope is in the promises of God and His plans for the future of this earth. Our God who has been our help in ages past is still on His throne, and His plans will be fulfilled. I don't know exactly how much time this world has left, but it would be fine with me if Jesus would come back today to reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Come, Lord Jesus, come!



Inspirations

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Selling Kisses

How to make both ends meet is one of the problems confronting the churches over the country today, and especially the smaller ones. In many cases more or less questionable methods are resorted to, to raise money. For example, the papers tell of a case at Coapke, NY where at a church fair the Ladies' Aid Society had a tent on which this announcement was displayed: Miss Emily Lawson Will Sell Kisses— Price 25 cents each.

Of course the kisses went like hotcakes. The managers had taken in \$43 and would have taken in more had not one of the young men, after investing his quarter, made the remark that "There's only one trouble with that girl's kisses; she needs a shave." Upon this hint the tent was raided and the alleged "girl" turned out to be a man in disguise. Thus the scheme, which was immoral on its face, proved to be a deliberate fraud in the bargain.

LOVE TO LIVE,
LOVE TO PRAY,
LOVE OUR GOD,
EVERYDAY,
ASK FROM HIM,
FORGIVENESS TOO,
FOR HE SHALL GIVE,
IT ALL TO YOU.
KEEP STRONG UNTIL
THE RETURN OF CHRIST
NEVER FORGET
NEVER THINK TWICE
ABOUT BEING IN
GOD'S FAMILY
KEEP ON PRAYING
ON BENDED KNEE!

Open my eyes Lord to what You say
Let me hear You when I pray
Let me feel Your tender touch
Let me know You love me so much
Even though I may stumble and fall
Let me know You love me after all
And when the end is drawing near
I will hold you so close so very dear
I'll stand up for You my Lord, my
strength I'll follow You no matter
what the length No matter what
others might do or say
To the end, I will follow You anyway
Because You give me my peace, my
hope
In this life, You have helped me to
cope
With everything that I face everyday
I remember, you are the life, the
truth, and-the way!

In The Beginning

When God made the earth He had a
plan. A plan of salvation for what He
calls man. He gave man a choice to
obey His word, I wonder what
happened is it that man had not
heard? What is it anyway, this sin?
That seems to draw us in,
Does it smell sweet to us at first?
Then causes us to be our worst?
I feel the past catch up with me,
yet I have been forgivin.
And I remind myself of what Jesus
did, that makes my life worth livin.
He loves me for who I am in Him,
He is the only true love there is.
For none on this earth ever can,
come as close as this.
Thank you God for the grace you
give, You know we will need it!
Surely as long as we live!

Kimberly Ann Tierney

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Mountain Top High
I would like to climb a mountain to
reach so very high,
To be as close to God I can away up
in the sky.
No worries from the world below
sounds pretty good to me,
No crime, no hate, just God and I if
only that could be.
But that is not what God intends for
all of us to do,
He has in mind His work for us until
our time is through.
But that don't mean we can't go up
that mountain high you know,
To worship Him in love and truth
which makes our spirit grow.
It's in the valley we need Him most
and others all around,
Can see our love for Him is real
without a single sound.
That's why He needs us to come
down from mountains high above,
To show the world He cares for us,
and is a God of love.
So be content with your life wherever
it may lead,
And just know there is a God to help
in times of need.

Kimberly Ann Tierney

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About the Author:

Kimberly Ann Tierney is the wife of Pastor Wade Tierney of the Morse Mill Church of God in Missouri. Kim submitted several wonderful poems celebrating God's love.



How Long is a “Yom”?

Allon Maxwell

About the Author:

Allon Maxwell writes to us from Australia. He operates a ministry teaching the Kingdom of God. This article was incompletely printed in the previous issue. We run it again with our apologies.

There is often great confusion about what is meant by the word “DAY” in Genesis Chapters 1 and 2. Part of this confusion arises from geologists who interpret the “geological evidence” which they claim to find in the rocks, as “proof” of great age for the earth. Often this can be as much as 4500 MILLION years!

However, we should also be aware that today there is a very great volume of published literature from “young earth” geologists who present very logical sounding arguments as to why the speculations of the “long age experts” about the “evidence” may be completely wrong! For unskilled laymen, the scientific discussions about the geology may often be quite unintelligible. However, the Creation story, as told in the first few chapters of Genesis, is written in very simple language. We are being told that the work was accomplished in six literal “earth-days,” each with an evening and a morning! And it is easy to see that this “young earth” interpretation of the geological data fits the language of Genesis far better than the “long age” version.

THE MEANING OF THE HEBREW WORD “YOM”

The attempt to accommodate the Scriptures to fit “long age speculations” tends to revolve around the meaning of the Hebrew word “yom” (usually translated “day,” meaning a literal earth day — but occasionally with other meanings such as “time,” “daily,” “year,” etc.)

You don’t need to be a Hebrew Scholar to use a Strong’s or Young’s

Concordance to study the use of the word. But there are serious problems when amateurs insist that they have conclusively proved *from Scripture* that the Genesis days are *not* literal “earth-day” 24-hour periods, but much longer times. Depending on who you hear it from, speculation about *that* ranges from “1000-year days” to “long-age days” of millions, or even billions of years.

Of course, it is certainly true that there are places in the Bible where the word “yom” clearly does not mean a literal “earth-day” of 24 hours. That is no different from our own language. English also sometimes uses “day” that way. There is even *one* place where that is true in Genesis chapter 2. (See Gen 2:4) But that does *not* logically follow that *all* the other “days” of Genesis are *not* “earth-days”!

The context in the Genesis creation story seems to point us clearly to literal “earth-days.” (“The evening and the morning were the first day,” etc.) And there are things described there that become very confusing if the days are not “earth-days,” e.g.: How did the trees, shrubs, grass, and flowers, pollinate and reproduce for all those millions of years, without the sun until the “long age fourth day”; or without the bees and birds who transfer the pollen, until the fifth “day”; or without the animals through whose digestive systems some seeds must pass in order to germinate, until the sixth “day”?

“YOM” IN EXODUS 20:8-11 and 31:12-17.

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is

within thy gates.”

Clearly these days in Exodus are “earth-days” of 24 hours each! In the context, *nothing* else will do! Shall we then presume to change the meaning of the identical word in Exodus 20:11 and 30:17, to “long age” terms? “For in 6000 years (or 6 million, or 6 billion?) God made the earth and all that is in it — and for the next 1000 years (or million, or billion) God rested!”

It doesn’t fit at all, does it?

The information currently in the hands of the scientists is incomplete and inadequate. It has changed remarkably in recent decades. But, we don’t have it all yet, by a long way! What we do know is that in the face of regular new discoveries and theories (yes, *theories!*) “interpretations” of the information seem to change as rapidly as the information itself. Yesterday’s text books are soon “out of date” and discarded. And new textbooks will be written tomorrow to push the current theory.

But one thing we can be certain of: when the evidence is all in, God will be vindicated, and Genesis will be shown clearly as an accurate record of what actually happened at Creation. And I suspect that some of God’s answers to our questions, may surprise us all — “young earth” and “long age” alike!



My Faith Journey

Through Mallorie's Trial

Steve Myers

About the Author:

Steve & Becky Myers are members of the Oregon Church of God, Oregon, Illinois. Steve writes this heartwarming story of their nine-year-old daughter's ordeal with a brain tumor and the role that faith and prayer has played in her recovery.

We had all arrived back at my in-laws house after our traditional Christmas Eve Mexican meal. This year we tried Dos Reales in Rockford. Boy, did Mallorie put down the chips and hot (very hot) salsa!

Happy birthday was sung to Jesus, presents unwrapped, and desserts were beginning to be munched upon. The cousins had begun playing with their new treasures when I heard Becky being told that Mallorie had just thrown up. Too much salsa, I thought, as I aided Becky with cleanup.

Within five minutes we both knew something was wrong. Mallorie was staring out of the corner of her eyes and not responding to any of our questions. We rushed her to Rockford Memorial, having no clue what we were facing.

As soon as the nurse looked at Mal in the ER, she grabbed her from me and ran

to an exam room. The nurse mentioned Mallorie being in "respiratory arrest," which really scared us. I can't recall talking to Becky in that exam room, only praying with her. There was our baby girl, seizing on the table, tubes down her throat, IVs in her veins, wires everywhere, and not one thing in our control.

Please God, let us have our Mallorie back.

The meds started to relax Mallorie's poor body. This allowed me to call my parents to let them know what was going on. No answer. I called my Grandmother Kirkpatrick. She reminded me of the Christmas Eve service at church. I left a message at the church and my mom quickly called back. If this incident had to happen, I'm glad it happened on Christmas Eve. It allowed God to hear many, many prayers on our behalf.

Please God, help the doctors find out what is wrong.

Our families arrived to comfort us. Pastor Michael came as soon as he could. He helped to remind us that we shouldn't beat ourselves up by asking "why." Pastor Tim Spickler from the New Life Bible Church stopped in also. Their church's community candlelight service was later that night so about 150 more

people from the Winnebago community were offering prayers on our behalf. Mallorie left for a second CAT scan, still not realizing what was happening. She was having some problems breathing due to some vomit in one of her lungs.

Please, dear Lord, let everything turn out okay.

The emergency room doctor came into the room to show us the CAT scan x-rays. "It looks like she has a tumor on the side of her brain. However, it looks small and there is only one spot. We will know more after she has a MRI." My heart sank. I wish it was me, not her!

Our main nurse in the ER had been very strong and encouraging the whole night. He kept saying, "She'll be okay, everything will be fine." He was our angel that night. When he came into the room to take Mallorie upstairs, he told us that he had heard the news. With a tremble in his voice, he told us how very sorry he was and that he would be praying for us.

At that moment, I knew things were going to be okay. Here was a man, a man who visibly drug a leg (I'm guessing from MS). He could be bitter toward God, but instead he made a point to tell



My Faith Journey Through Mallorie's Trial

Steve Myers

us that he would be praying for us!

Thank you, God, for men like this. Please allow me to turn this situation into a testimony of Your power. Please use us.

We fell asleep that night with Mallorie hallucinating due to the effects of the seizure.

Christmas morning, Becky and I decided to open all our presents at the hospital. I drove home, loaded the presents, drove back to the hospital with Zachary and Maggie, and we proceeded to trash the hospital room with paper, bows, and boxes. I really felt a sense of peace Christmas morning.

Our neurosurgeon, Dr. Todd Alexander, stopped by to tell us that he felt the tumor was benign because it had calcium around it. More would be learned after the MRI, scheduled for tomorrow morning. Mallorie's breathing was much better. Her lung had completely cleared up. We shared with Mallorie what we had learned. She was so calm while hearing the news. It actually helped boost Becky and my confidence even more.

Later that night, Mal asked me if her tumor was like Ashlee's (Her friend, Ashlee Jarvi, who was diagnosed with a malignant brain

tumor). I explained to Mal how Ashlee's tumor was much worse than hers.

A note on Ashlee: Her mom called Becky to let her know that Ashlee cried and cried when she heard Mallorie had a tumor. Ashlee stayed up thinking of things that she could tell Mallorie to encourage her.

Lord, allow Mallorie to stay strong. Help me to continue to pour all my trust in You.

Early the next morning Becky woke me up. She was spotting (she was pregnant at the time). The hospital admitted her also. I sat alone with my head in my hands, praying: I'm Steve, not Job! However, this is the hand I've been dealt. I can do this. I went downstairs for Mallorie's MRI.

While waiting, my mom shared with me how she'd prayed that a miracle would happen and the doctors couldn't find a tumor. I told her how great that would be, but then we would have to endure a battery of tests to find the cause of the seizure.

I soon left to find Becky. She was having an ultrasound at the same time as Mallorie's MRI. While God watched over Mallorie, he allowed me to see my "yet to be born" baby boy with my beautiful wife. Later that same day, Dr.

Alexander arrived to our room with the test results. He asked Becky and me if we wanted to talk privately with him. Boy, were our hearts pounding!

He told us that the news was even better than expected. She didn't have a tumor. She had a cavernous malformation, a loosely joined clump of non-developed blood vessels. She has had it from before birth. He felt this area had dripped some liquid onto the brain, triggering the seizure. Surgery was recommended. We agreed.

Our God is awesome! My mom's miracle had happened, but my wish to know the cause of the seizures was fulfilled.

Thank you, God, for the good news. Surround the operating room with your presence during Mallorie's surgery.

By the time Saturday morning came around, I had visited the hospital chapel a few times. My biggest concern was that I felt I wasn't concerned enough about the surgery. I knew things would go fine. I was only worried about not being worried. In retrospect, I guess it was God simply showing me how I can fully trust Him and have total faith in Him.

The nurses came to take



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Mallorie to surgery around 7:45. Becky and I prayed with her as the anesthetist did his work. She gave us one last smile before they wheeled her in.

At 9:00, a nurse from the OR called to say that everything was fine but that they had gotten off to a late start. By 10:45 it was over. Dr. Alexander assured us that everything went as expected but she could experience some pain while opening her mouth. He had to cut into her temporal muscle. Her sweet face could also swell up for a few days because of the surgery. Mal would probably be in the hospital another five to seven days. God please help Mallorie deal with the pain.

We took turns in the ICU unit that night. God aided us. The PEDs unit had been very busy but that night they were slow. This allowed us to keep Mallorie's room. Now we didn't have to empty the room, taking it home, only to bring it back the next day. This also allowed Becky and me to get some sleep. The hospital does not allow visitor beds in the ICU, not that we could have slept anyway. Mallorie stayed up all night long. Apparently, morphine has a reverse effect on our daughter, it makes her

more alert not drowsy. Mallorie's only complaint of pain was that the back of her head hurt. Come to find out, the pain was from her ponytail which Dr. Alexander put in her hair. It was too tight! Her face that we feared would be swollen and bruised was as precious as it was Christmas Eve before all this started.

God, please let Mallorie have a quick recovery. Use her as a tool to show Your grace and power to everyone around her.

After one night in the PEDs ICU, she was back in her standard room. We couldn't keep Mallorie in bed, she was ready to go home. The many visitors, including doctors and nurses, stood in amazement. "Tomorrow will be the real test," many said. "It will hit her tomorrow." Tomorrow came. Mallorie hadn't slowed. Dr. Alexander asked us when we wanted to take our princess home. Tuesday would be the day. Mallorie started to pack. Three days after brain surgery, she would be home. Everyone who would comment on her quick recovery would be met with Becky or me telling them that many people have been praying for her. Most of the time, the people would tell us

that they had been praying also.

Mallorie came home New Year's Eve. Take away a short bout with a flu bug, things have gone great. It seems that everywhere I go, people (some of whom I have never met), ask how Becky and Mallorie are doing. A large number tell us that we have been on their church's prayer chain. How these people all found out, I'll never know. Praise the Lord for all these prayers from all these people.

One story which really touched my heart is one of a co-worker. His wife and he had lost a son about a year ago due to complications from drug abuse. He told me that I may think it's "corny," but as soon as he heard about Mallorie, his wife and he got on their knees and prayed for her. I assured him that it wasn't "corny," and that it touched me that with everything they had gone through, they would think of us.

Please continue to be with Mallorie and that she will not experience any more seizures after she is taken off her medicine. Bless her life and all the lives she has touched. Amen.



Christians In Uniform

Tom Fischhaber

About the Author:

Tom Fischhaber is a pastoral ministry student at Atlanta Bible College. Tom is recently retired from the US Air Force after 23 years of service. He offers a perspective on Christians and war which sees God's hand in international conflicts, and the option for the Christian's participation therein.

The drumbeats of war are echoing across our nation once again. Our military is poised to strike (and in fact may well have struck by the time this goes to print), and almost everyone here is getting nervous. Every night the local news media is broadcasting troop movements or the location of some secret weapon or forward operating location. So much for security. The front pages of our printed media are plastered with headlines on this very sensitive issue as well; it is very hard to escape. In the past, Americans have supported our government in these situations, in this case there seems to be some doubt in their minds. Our president, a Christian man who starts every day in prayer, is positive that this is the right thing to do. He insists that this is the only way. It appears that this is going to happen.

After 9-11 we are all feeling a little vulnerable and many would like us to stay out of Iraq, but I do not think we can. If history has shown us anything it is that America can not just sit on the sidelines and watch the world go by. We were in an isolationist

posture prior to both world wars, and yet we got drawn in. After WW II, we disarmed and relaxed, and four years later we found ourselves sending untrained, and under equipped troops to the Korean peninsula. It was a very harsh and costly lesson.

In Vietnam we got into a war we had no real intention of winning, run by politics and the press. This too was another bitter lesson. In the last war with Iraq, our government, fearing mass civilian casualties and believing the Iraqi government would collapse from within, stopped short of Baghdad and total victory. This of course did not happen. Now after the bombing at Kobar Towers, two American embassies, a Navy vessel and the World Trade Center twice, we are once again, tasting those bitter tears of hard learned lessons. We have been just sitting back and reacting to what the other side does. We have been like a boxer with his hands at his side, waiting for the next blow to come. This president has been a little proactive. He has done his best to eliminate as much of the threat as he can reach. Where and when will the next strike come? Make no mistake it will come.

We can sit back and wait or we can take action on our own. No one wants to send their sons and daughters off to war, but if they must go I would rather it be when we are ready and able. These people we fight against have a long history of murdering civilians. They attack the

unsuspecting and the defenseless. Children on school buses and families out for a Sunday walk through their neighborhood, men and women asleep in their bunks. They find honor in the spilling of helpless and innocent blood, and do so in the name of their god. They are not afraid to die for their cause, no matter how twisted it might be.

This is what we face. We cannot run and hide, we can pray, but I think the handwriting is on the wall. Forces are marshalling and alliances are forming. As we read Revelation and Daniel we see that the world political scene is looking very familiar. Israel is back at home, and we are very, very, close to having a world economy. We are still feeling the effects of a worldwide wave of economic depression that has struck down some of the most prosperous economies in the world. The Lord said fear not, these things must happen, and of course, they will. I for one am not a fan of sitting around waiting for the next shoe to drop. I feel we should take action, but not just military action. The church should be focused more on the opportunities and battles here on the home front. These uncertain times provide a great opportunity for us to witness about our God and our faith. We need to be strong and confident in our faith and focused on the future in the kingdom. We need to try to help as many as we can reach that final goal. All this other stuff around us is simply a distraction to keep us from focusing on what should



Theme Article

Christians In Uniform

Tom Fischhaber

be our goal. We have much to do right here at home, lets get busy with the task at hand. Voice your opinion, get out and vote, but above all stay focused on the will of God, and the direction of the church.

That being said, many people believe that Christians should not be in the military. I have heard it said you might have to kill another Christian, or that God said thou shalt not kill. War is a sin they say. But to say war itself is a sin is an extreme statement requiring a blind eye to much of the Old Testament history as well as New and Old Testament prophecy of the end time conflict. First of all, not every one in the military is a "gun tote'n kill'n machine." In fact the vast majority are support personnel and maintainers, who except in extreme cases, will never fire a shot in anger. I spent 23 years in the military and never killed anyone, hard to believe, but true. In fact, my job was to teach people how to avoid the enemy.

I worked with hundreds of people who never killed anyone, Christian or otherwise.

The idea that killing or murder is a sin is true. But the same God who said thou shalt not kill, also said you should stone adulterers and murderers to death, as well as unruly children. The fact is, Israel always had a standing army and fought many battles to protect their land. That Saul killed his thousands and David killed ten thousand, was sung in Jerusalem. There are times when God,

wishing to teach Israel an object lesson would direct the battle, and reduce the force, but those times seem to be the exception rather than the rule. There are those that say that Jesus would never have advocated military service, but He was very impressed with the centurion and had ample opportunity to say get out of the service, it is evil. But He did not so command this man, nor did any of the apostles when they encountered jailers, guards, or centurions. No, the Bible does not say or imply that military service is immoral or unworthy of Christian service. There are plenty of military men in the Bible who are very highly spoken of like David, Jonathan, Barack, Gideon, Samson, Abraham, and Joshua to name a few. We do not see many in the New Testament, as there was no sovereign Israel and they were living under the law of Rome. Again, we do see military men spoken of but they were never directed to leave their jobs. In fact Paul said do not quit your jobs, keep doing what your doing when you become a Christian.

As for the possibility that military members might be asked to do something immoral, it's worth considering that many other professions carry this potential. We've all heard of similar challenges confronting Christians who are lawyers, salesmen, CPAs, bankers and even police officers to name a few. Sometimes folks in any number of professions risk losing their jobs if they don't tell that white lie or fudge a few numbers. There

are some teachers who have been asked to teach evolution as a fact or condone the gay lifestyle. In God's eyes, heresy, lying, cheating, adultery or murder is all the same.

Lastly, could you imagine a military without Christian men and women? If God calls you to the military will you answer? I have met many young men and women who have had that call and answered. They have had many opportunities to hold forth their faith and be salt and especially light to those around them. As an ex-military member I can say it is a rich experience and you are always coming in contact with new people, people far from family, people looking for fellowship, friendship and love. People often in crisis, and in difficult or dangerous situations. What better environment, or more fertile soil for planting the seed and holding out the good news of the kingdom, could you ever find?

I believe God wants and needs people in different walks of life and occupations and situations. We are to take the gospel to the whole world, I do not think God will care if you are doing it in uniform or civvies.



U.S. "Draws Line in Sand"

Hollis Partlowe

About the Author:

Hollis Partlowe currently serves as the pastor of the Dixon, Illinois Church of God. Hollis wrote this article during the previous Gulf War, but we thought it was appropriate and timely to republish it (with his permission).

The eyes of the world are again glued on the Middle East as Saddam Hussein's Iraqi military forces invaded tiny Kuwait the first part of August. As a result President Bush has drawn a line at the Saudi Arabian border. Should Hussein continue his invasion into Saudi Arabia, American military might, which has already poured into the country, would undoubtedly come to her defense. One thing that all seem to agree on is that there is a serious crisis in the Persian Gulf area. Nations around this area are understandably nervous, to say the least.

Nations around the world are calling for withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait, but the Iraqi ambassador declared August 9 that the move was "eternal and irreversible." It is believed that the take-over is to begin Hussein's move to head up the Arab world.

As this is being written (August 11), President Bush is considering a naval blockade of Kuwait for her protection and to assure that the black gold will continue to flow to the industrialized world. "America

will stand by her friends," the president said.

Hussein's Fellow Arab Enemies

Arab leaders, in a heated meeting in Cairo, agreed to send Arab military forces to Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf states to protect them from possible Iraqi attack. This decision by a majority of the 21-member Arab League Summit was a sharp rebuff to Iraq's Hussein. Just hours earlier he had called for all Arab states to rise up against Pro-Western Arab leaders. He accused them of blaspheming Islam by opening the doors to a Western presence in the seat of Islam's holiest shrines.

Twelve of the 20 Arab League members present voted for the resolution to oppose Iraq which was sponsored by the conservative six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council. Iraq, Libya, and the Palestine Liberation Organization voted against the resolution. The others abstained or expressed reservations, but took no position. Tunisia was not present.

The resolution was a serious setback for Saddam and puts the heart of the Arab world - Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and the rest of the oil-rich Persian Gulf states on record in support of the escalating international campaign to reverse Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on August 2. In spite of this, Hussein continues a "Holy War" to seize

Saudi cities despite the fact that the United Nations Security Council has unanimously demanded that Iraqi troops leave Kuwait.

At the same time, some of the Arab countries are uncomfortable with the United States trying to solve an Arabic dispute; while a few Arabic neighbors have chosen to support Iraq and have declared that Saudi Arabia should become an American graveyard. Moreover, chemical warfare is a part of the Middle East struggle. Iraq used poisonous gas against her cousins in Iran in the recent eight-year war. This was the first time it had been used since World War I. As a part of preparation, United States servicemen in Saudi Arabia have been issued gas masks as a part of their standard equipment.

While this editor is neither pacifist nor militant, it appears to me that the "thief of Baghdad" should be stopped. It is a war of greed. Before the invasion, Kuwait's per-capita earning was five times more than Iraq's.

Like the neighborhood bully who strong-arms smaller children into handing over their candy, Iraq is intent upon possessing all that she covets. Burdened with billions of dollars of debt from its eight-year war with Iran, Iraq looked upon oil-rich Kuwait as an unguarded bank vault.

As a thief, Saddam has aggressively snatched up



U.S. "Draws Line in Sand"

Hollis Partlowe

Kuwait, installed a puppet government, and has plundered the emirate's treasury - moving it into his own personal piggy bank.

Having made an example of Kuwait, Hussein intends to pressure Saudi Arabia and the other oil-rich nations that line the Persian Gulf into letting Iraq dictate financial policy.

The man who earned the title "Butcher of Baghdad," left unchallenged, would control nearly all of the oil that's imported by the United States and Western Europe.

The dangers for the United States and the free world are frightening. In Hussein's hands, Middle-East oil would be a loaded gun held to the heads of western democracies.

While this editor hates war with a purple passion, sometimes it is the lesser of two evils.

Meanwhile, Back at the Gas Pumps

With the explosive situation in the oil-rich Middle East, gas prices have sky-rocketed. Prices have risen from 15 to 25 cents per gallon, depending on where one lives.

Then, too, price increases have spread from the gas pumps to the air fields. Major airlines raised their prices about 10% on domestic flights. While it may

be a "Holy War" in the Arabic countries, to the oil companies its business and profits. Many Americans believe that the consumer is being ripped off. I agree.

The Biblical Picture of the Last Days

Many Christians are asking if the happenings in the Persian Gulf area have any prophetic significance. Certainly we should be cautious about any specific fulfillments, but the picture shaping up there is what one would expect in the last days, according to the Bible.

Our Lord taught us that in the end time there would be wars and rumors of wars, nation would rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. (Matt. 24:6, 7.) He then concluded: "With all these things the birthpangs of the new age begin" (v. 8, NEB). Events on the horizon today could well be the beginning of the birth-pangs. Events today could escalate to the war of Armageddon very rapidly. (Rev. 16:16.) If this be accepted, Jesus could come for his bride at any moment. His blood-washed children live in constant expectation of His return. (I Thes. 5:4, 5.)

Joel 3:9-16, most prophetic students believe, describes the final conflict of the ages. God, through the prophet, addresses the nations: "Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the

men of war draw near . . . Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. Assemble yourselves. . . Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down: for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great."

The picture here is one of God calling the nations to judgment. "Jehoshaphat" means "Jehovah is judge"; it's the place where God will judge the heathen. Since the fourth century the Kidron Valley has been named the Valley of Jehoshaphat, but there is no evidence that any valley ever actually bore this name. The thought may be that God is going to judge the ungodly nations at a place of His own choosing and at a time unknown to us. Be that as it may, the powder keg of the world is the Middle East and no one knows how short the fuse is. Study the Joel passage. The nations today are doing what he predicted they would do. His focus is on "the day of the LORD" (1:15;3:14). "Prepare to meet thy God"!



A Family Bible Study

“How Can We Know That God Loves Us?”

Smead Family

(Reprinted from the April 17, 1954 issue of the Restitution Herald in memory of Pastor Cecil Smead. Pastor Smead fell asleep in death on March 8, 2003.)

“God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

John: The love of God is hard to explain when there is so much trouble in the world.

Cecil: If we could explain it so people would really believe it, how much happier they could be.

Mildred: But the Bible does explain God’s love. It also illustrates it.

Cecil: You mean that the death of Christ illustrates God’s love?

Mildred: I mean the whole story of His life, death, and resurrection, His ascension into heaven, and finally His coming Kingdom.

John: I know the golden text of the Bible is John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Mildred: I think people find it hard to accept the love of God because it is a gift that puts us in debt to Him. Some of the countries America has helped hate us most because we have put them in debt to us by our gifts to them. They would rather be able to pay for what they get.

Cecil: But what are they to do if they cannot pay for it?

John: They could accept the facts of life and repay with their goodwill.

Children are in the same position. They are not able to repay in dollars for what they receive.

Cecil: But parents feel well rewarded if their children keep on growing. As to the love of God, I think people ought to see how important they are in the sight of God that He should give His only begotten Son for their everlasting life. He allowed Jesus to suffer.

John: Looked at that way, the trials

and troubles of life are as much to be expected as the troubles of growing are to a child.

Mildred: Yes, and as a child should know that his parent still loves him, so a person should know that God loves him in spite of allowing him to be in trouble.

John: People sometimes say it was cruel of God to send His Son to suffer on the cross. How could God love Jesus and send Him to the cross?

Cecil: God was paying the price it took to save us. He gave Jesus that cup of sorrow to save us.

Mildred: But John means what about His love for Jesus? Is our salvation more important than His only Son?

Cecil: Those are hard questions to answer. Human nature is very complex – how much more God’s nature! God loves us, but He is pure and cannot sin. The mystery of God’s love which allowed trouble to come to His loved One is a mystery we face. It is, in reality, the process of growing to everlasting life. Even His Son Jesus was made perfect through suffering. He got good out of it.

Mildred: I think we ought to say also that Jesus’ death on the cross was voluntary on His part. God did not make Him do that. Jesus said that He laid down His life.

John: How can you say it was voluntary when they took Him and killed Him?

Mildred: Read the accounts in the Bible and you will see that He had power to come down from the cross all the time. But He did not use it.

Cecil: You also can see it was voluntary from the very first. His preaching made enemies from the first, and at the last He placed Himself right in their hands at Jerusalem.

John: Would you call Him a suicide, then?

Cecil: No. He did not kill Himself. He was murdered. It was the greatest crime of all time. But from God’s standpoint, and that of Jesus, He was a sacrifice. From God’s positive

standpoint He was fighting the dragon of evil and gaining the victory. Men look on the crucifixion and being to hate the sin which put Him there. On the cross He leads the way to life.

John: I see. He was gaining His own everlasting life as well as ours.

Cecil: Yes. He shows us that gaining eternal life depends on making the right choices. No man is a mere machine – not even Jesus. God does not want blind obedience. He wants intelligent obedience.

Mildred: A machine is something that blindly obeys its master. But God wants the fellowship of people in eternity that voluntarily love righteousness. Jesus shows us the way to do this.

Cecil: In understanding God’s love for us we need to understand that although God is all-powerful, there are some things He cannot do for us.

John: I suppose that is like a child. His parents or his teachers may be strong and skillful, but all they can do is point the way.

Mildred: Yes, the parents’ job is finished when the child is grown up and stands independently on his own two feet. The good parent then looks for fellowship that is entirely voluntary on the part of the grown-up son or daughter. A poor job has been done if the son or daughter still depends on the parents to make his or her decisions.

Cecil: That is a good illustration of the relationship between God and His children. God will do anything for us that we cannot do for ourselves. He will forgive us, but we must repent for ourselves. He has given us the Bible, but He will not force us to read it. He will come through an open door, but He will not open one we have shut.

John: When you say He will not, you mean He cannot?

Cecil: He cannot because He will not violate the laws He has made. If God were to violate His own laws there could be no order, the universe would



A Family Bible Study

“How Can We Know That God Loves Us?”

Smead Family

fall apart. God would change, blowing hot one day and cold the next.

Mildred: God, in order to be God, has to be perfect. He has been the same from the very beginning. In the text, “For God so loved the world,” He had that love before Jesus Christ came, lived, died, and rose again.

Cecil: I believe that God must have loved mankind as much before Christ as after Christ. But He has been misunderstood.

John: We know that Jesus is an evidence of God’s love. But what evidence do you have in the Old Testament?

Cecil: The evidence of God dealing with men for thousands of years. Abraham was called the Friend of God. David was called a man after God’s own heart. The Old Testament abounds in descriptions of God’s goodness and mercy. It is full of promises for a kingdom on earth when the time comes, a kingdom of peace and righteousness wherein all mankind will live together righteously.

John: The twenty-third Psalm is in the Old Testament. It states: “The Lord is my shepherd.”

Mildred: God will not always be misunderstood. Here is a verse from Isaiah in the Old Testament: “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (11:9).

John: I think you have proved your point all right. God has always loved mankind the same as He does now. But why do people say that the Old Testament God was cruel while the New Testament God is love?

Cecil: Misunderstanding. God is so perfect that it is hard for sinful humanity to appreciate Him and must always be imputing fierceness and anger to Him far beyond the statements of the Bible.

John: There must be simple explanations for punishment in the Old Testament.

Mildred: God cannot allow evil to exist for perpetual time. The punishments mentioned in the Old Testament were necessary and sensible in the light of God’s plan to save the world.

Cecil: Yes. All hope must have been lost if God had not brought a few though the perilous times as He did Noah through the Flood. The Flood was a great sorrow to God, but He could see no way to avoid it and still fulfill the plan to have His Kingdom on earth. All the punishments mentioned were necessary in order to preserve the line from which to produce the Christ.

John: In other words, God had to choose between the punishments mentioned in the Old Testament and letting the world go its way to destruction.

Cecil: That is the point. It had not been limited to Old Testament times, either. It has been a hard choice to have to allow some of the misery that not only past history but present news tells us about, but it is the road that leads at last to the establishment of God’s Kingdom on earth.

Mildred: Jesus illustrates this, as Hebrews 2:14 states, “that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death.” Some day we can be sure that God’s plan will be completed, and then we will understand the tears and heartaches of these days.

Cecil: God is building for a new world. Like when a building is being erected, there is a lot of equipment and scaffolding around. But when the building is completed, all that is taken away and we have the beautiful building.

John: If you carry the allegory to its end, then, the scaffolding is lost but the building is saved. Does that mean that some people will be lost?

Cecil: My allegory had to do more with the things that happen. But if you want to talk about whether some people will be lost and some saved, the Bible text you quoted from John

3:16 indicates that is true.

John: That text said, “Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” I can see very well that God loves those that believe and have life, but does he love those that perish?

Mildred: I believe He loves those that perish, also. Otherwise, why does Paul say in 1 Timothy 2:3,4, “God our savior; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”

Cecil: I agree with you. God desires all men to be saved, but He will never force them to be saved. The great tragedy of the Bible is that God loves and loses as well as loves and saves.

John: But God has so much power. Couldn’t He purify and eventually save all mankind?

Cecil: It is a dream that some have had, and we sympathize with it. But even God cannot force people, nor will He attempt to force them. The Bible is clear on this point. For the sake of the body, the diseased arm must be cut off, lest the whole body be destroyed. Or, as Malachi puts it, “All that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.”

John: Does that mean they pass completely out of existence?

Cecil: Yes. Psalm 37 makes that clear. Jesus spoke of them being “destroyed.” Other similar words are used, all of which mean the wicked shall completely cease to exist, to be as though he had never existed at all. God’s love is clean that way. We know that He loves us all and will do His utmost to bring us to eternal life, shot of making up our minds for us. He leaves that to us. But I say with full assurance that the lost are those who shut the door in His face, and that He is doing everything in His power to prove His love so that we will accept and follow Jesus’ way.



Pray For These Troops Too!

Tom Colburn

About the Author:

Tom Colburn is a graduating pastoral ministry student at Atlanta Bible College. Tom asks us to remember to pray for the "spiritual troops" as well as the military ones.

War, traditionally, with few exceptions, has a way of bringing our country together, patriotically. We like to rally behind our troops. And when we don't, such as in the infamous Vietnam Era, it's not a pretty picture. One of the questions lingering behind the two articles in this issue regarding war is can we indeed, "support our troops" without supporting the war? Whether we are for or against this war, I think the answer to this question is yes.

But first, I'd like to pose another question. If it's easy and natural for most Americans of all political stripes to rally behind the troops in time of war, shouldn't there be some rallying going on among Christians in such a time as this? Don't Christians have something unique to rally behind? The question is rhetorical. I'm preaching to the choir.

As Christians *in* the world, with a desire not to be *of* the world, we all are fighting a daily battle. I opened a sermon the other day quoting Matthew 6:34. "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." I love the poetry of the King James Version. But we can boil it down to blunt, contemporary English: *Don't worry about tomorrow, it'll take care of itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

I'm sure we can all say *Amen!* to Matthew 6:34 in any translation. We're all aware of the daily struggle. We as individuals pray hard and strive hard to listen for God's guidance and heed His call. We pray for His strength to carry us through. We can pray for God's will to somehow be done in the midst of the war in Iraq or elsewhere, but how important it is to also pray for the "troops" in the daily spiritual war as well.

Every dedicated Christian, sincerely seeking to follow God's will is an enlisted man or woman in God's army. And we need to support our troops even while we're a member of these troops ourselves. It's vital that we rally behind and support our Christian "troops" with encouragement and prayer as the world grows nervously closer to the final events that will transform this earth.

Consider these words from Ephesians 6 as we contemplate this spiritual battle as the physical wars around us bring us ever closer to that final battle and the ushering in of the Kingdom.

"Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints" (13-18 NASB).

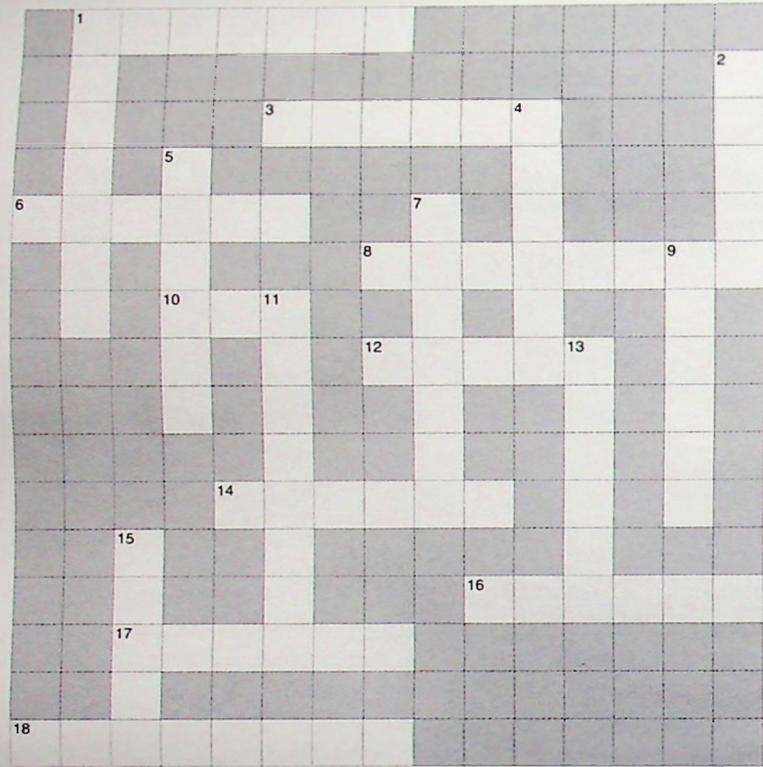
But regarding our military, we should pray for our troops if for no other reason they are fellow human beings. Most if not all of these men and women sincerely believe they are doing the right thing for the right reason. They are striving to protect their brothers and sisters in America and her allies which includes us. Whether we agree or disagree with their assessment of "the right thing to do," we can pray that God be with them and guide them toward His will. Our omnipresent, omniscient God is present with them and is well able to advance His purpose amid the most unlikely environments.

May God be with our men and women in military advancing His cause by turning a heart Godward, and may He be with the many devout truth-seeking men and women of God who fight daily with the armor of the Almighty in these last days. Even so come Jesus.



Easter Crossword

The Restitution Herald



Across

- 1. Ear was cut off by Peter
- 3. Color of the robe Jesus was given
- 6. Jesus said to him. "My kingdom is not of this world."
- 8. The sign over the cross said Jesus was from this town
- 10. Jesus shared this with Judas
- 12. Day of the week Jesus rose on
- 14. What Jesus rode into Jerusalem
- 16. Jesus was buried in this man's tomb
- 17. Judas' price for Jesus was how many pieces of silver?
- 18. Was freed instead of Jesus by request of the Jews

Down

- 1. A title for Jesus
- 2. Where Christ will ultimately reign
- 4. When Jesus appeared to the two men on the road where they headed?
- 5. The chief priest said they had no king but . . .
- 7. According to Mark, where did the angel say Jesus was headed upon resurrection?
- 9. What Jesus crown was made of
- 11. Week of celebration during which Jesus was crucified
- 13. Disciples who would not believe Jesus rose without proof
- 15. He denied Jesus three times

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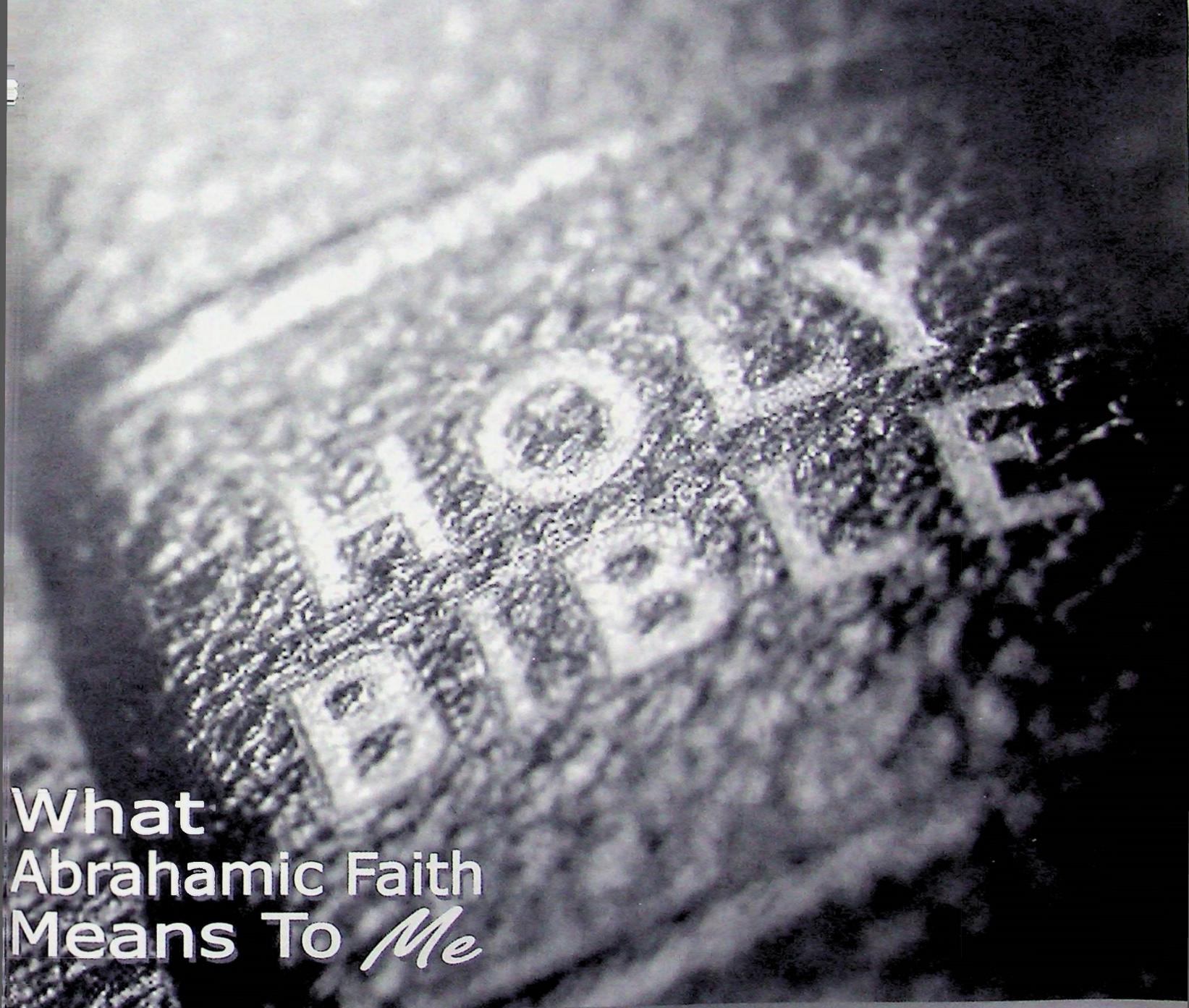
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Restitution Herald

Volume 92 Number 5

June, July 2003



What
Abrahamic Faith
Means To *Me*

Also in this Issue:

- The Five Love Languages
- Abrahamic Faith Began in Eden
- In Defense of John the Baptist
- Stories for the Family Altar
- Crossword



From the Editor



It's good to be back! I'm delighted to have the opportunity to resume my duties as Editor following a 6 month leave of absence. I appreciate the fine work of Steve Taylor and Tom Colburn in my absence and the ongoing work of our excellent designer, Justin Taylor.

As I sat at my computer this morning wondering how I should approach this editorial, I was greeted by the following news item: "Do Men Get Depressed?"

The article discussed how depression is becoming much more commonly diagnosed in men as well as women but, often manifests itself differently in men:

"Whatever the reason, men's symptoms of depression can be misleading, because they often don't involve crying or feeling sad. Frequently, male depression first shows up in physical symptoms, such as headaches, GI distress, and sexual dysfunction. Other symptoms can include:

- Irritability, anger, and lashing out
- Substance abuse
- Inability to function at the office
- Interrupted sleep patterns"

As I read this I found the Spirit of God nudging me to share with you from my own experience. One of the things which led me to take a leave of absence last fall was "irritability, anger and lashing out." I also found myself having trouble sleeping at night. I spent some time seeing a Christian counselor and one of the diagnoses he made was

depression. Ouch! It's tough to have to admit to your family, friends and church that you're struggling with an emotional problem like depression. But I'm not unique. It occurs to me that there may be readers of the RH who may also struggle with depression or other emotional issues and be afraid to admit it to themselves or others for fear of the stigma attached to it. Let me pass along some information from noted Christian Physician Richard Carlson, M.D.:

DEPRESSED SAINTS

"Lurking beneath the stigma that many Christians with mental and emotional problems face is a simple question: Can a Spirit-filled Christian have emotional problems? The emotional-health gospel overlooks the record of the Bible itself and church history, just as health-and-wealth gospels must ignore the history of not-so-rich saints (not to speak of Jesus himself).

The Reformer who penned "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," Martin Luther, in 1527 wrote: "For more than a week I was close to the gates of death and hell. I trembled in all my members. Christ was wholly lost." According to Luther's famous biographer, Roland Bainton, Luther found himself "subject to recurrent periods of exaltation and depression of spirit." Luther himself had written that "the content of the depressions was always the same, the loss of faith that God is good and that he is good to me."

The famous preacher Charles

Spurgeon, who lit the fires of the nineteenth-century revival movement, struggled so severely with depression that he was forced to be absent from his pulpit for two to three months a year. In 1866 he told his congregation of his struggle: "I am the subject of depressions of spirit so fearful that I hope none of you ever get to such extremes of wretchedness as I go [through]." He explained that during these depressions, "Every mental and spiritual labor . . . had to be carried on under protest of spirit."

In the Bible we find that Moses, Elijah, Job, and Jeremiah suffered from depression, often to the point of being suicidal. Elijah's miraculous victory over the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18 is followed in the next chapter with Elijah despondent and trembling with fear: "And he was afraid and arose and ran for his life . . . and sat down under a juniper tree; and he requested for himself that he might die" (1 Kings 19:3-4; all verses quoted from the NASB unless otherwise noted).

I've heard Elijah here described as being a coward or accused of having a grand old pity party. Such interpretations fail to see God's compassionate response to his cry: "And the angel of the Lord came again a second time and touched him and said, 'Arise, eat, because the journey is too great for you'" (19:7). Far from criticizing him, the Lord allows him to rest and twice sends an angel to feed him.

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EDITOR
 JEFF FLETCHER

PUBLISHING SPECIALIST
 JUSTIN TAYLOR

PROOFREADER
 SARAH BUZZARD

MAILING AND SUBSCRIPTIONS
 MARCY PREWITT

ADDRESS EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE TO:
 THE RESTITUTION HERALD, ATTN: JEFF FLETCHER, 130
 WAYNE ST., PONCHATOULA, LA 70454. E-mail:
 happywoodscg@i-55.com

ADDRESS MAILING AND SUBSCRIPTION CORRESPONDENCE TO:
 THE RESTITUTION HERALD, ATTN: MARCY PREWITT,
 P. O. BOX 100,000, MORROW, GA 30260 (E-MAIL
 ADDRESS: info@abc-coggc.org).

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- THE ONENESS OF GOD (1 COR. 8:6);
- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S POWER (ACTS 1:8);
- JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT. 16:16) AND IS OUR MEDIATOR (1 TIM. 2:5);
- THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16);
- THE MORTALITY OF MAN (JOB 4:17; PSA. 146:4);
- THE NEAR RETURN OF CHRIST (ACTS 1:11), AND LIFE ONLY THROUGH HIM (COL. 3:3);
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- THE IMMORTALIZATION OF THOSE IN CHRIST (1 COR. 15:53, 54);
- THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (REV. 21:8);
- THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32);
- THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1-3);
- THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21);
- IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.



Theme Article

What Abrahamic Faith Means To Me

Robert C. Bernheisel

Robert is a graduate of Oregon Bible College and currently resides in Tennessee.

If you would have asked me what Abrahamic Faith means when I graduated from Bible college I would have told you such things as the oneness of God, the sleep of the dead, and the Promise Land for Israel. Over 20 years later I have come to a much different conclusion. The true teachings that I mentioned before are not Abrahamic faith. They are Abrahamic belief. They are what Abraham believed. But it takes little faith to simply believe a teaching. The faith of Abraham is when we start to believe and act upon something that is more than humanly possible. It is being sure of what we hope for and knowing it is real even when we do not see it. When the apostle Paul spoke highly of the faith of Abraham it was because Abraham believed that God would produce a promised child through Abraham and Sarah even though he was 100 years of age and Sarah was unable to have a child (Romans 4). This was something that Abraham could not do by normal human knowledge or strength.

After I graduated from Bible college I came to a road block in my efforts to serve God. I would describe it as a "moment of crisis." Many of us encounter such moments when we make decisions that drastically affect the rest of our lives. I did not make my decision based on any scripture but in looking back I have decided that my decision was a "Moses decision." When he tried to help his people and killed the Egyptian things did not go as he expected them to happen. So he ran. That's what I did. I had nothing to refer to, or depend upon in my time of crisis. Just like Moses I felt that my people

were not supportive so I moved away and looked for other options.

However, something kept drawing me back. I would not, and could not, abandon what I had learned. I do not believe that everyone needs to believe as I do in order to be saved. But for me to pretend that I do not know any better or that I have not seen would be an act of doubt and unfaithfulness. If I have learned anything in my exodus it is that I can trust God to keep his promises and see me through; no matter how tall the wall or tightly locked the door is before me. What I thought could not happen is not difficult for God at all.

What has convinced me of the importance of faith with belief is not the miracles I have seen, and I have seen a few, but the faithfulness of God when it is not deserved. Abraham lied about his wife not once but twice! He went to a foreign land and pretended to be her brother, and she joined him in the lie, so that he might not be killed by someone who wanted her. Why did he do this? Because he had belief but not faith. He believed in the promises of God but he did not have faith for God to protect his life. So he came up with a plan of his own. Do we ever assume that God can not, or will not solve the problem and make our own plan? Do we ever act like part-time deists who believe that God just set things in motion and it is up to us 'til Jesus returns? Abraham underestimated the power of God. And we underestimate His grace if we think we need to be perfect for Him to work through us. Abraham and Sarah grew impatient in waiting for God to fulfill his promised child. So they came up with their own plan to have a child through a younger woman called Hagar. They had a healthy boy, but a bad plan. They lost faith in the

miracle worker and started trusting in the flesh, their own plan. They wanted to fulfill the promise of God through a work of the flesh. It only resulted in trouble and probably delayed the fulfillment of God's promise.

Thank God for his faithfulness! He protected Abraham and Sarah, even though they had lied about their relationship. Then when they came up with a substitute for God's plan, Ishmael, God politely said "no." It needs to be done through the power of God! I can see that God has been faithful to me even when I left him out. I was not leaving him out by living an unholy life. It was by not trusting Him to make a way when I thought there was no way!

When David killed Goliath I am convinced that the only thing that set him off from all the soldiers in Saul's army was the faith that God could do it. He was probably not the only one living a holy life before God. I even think there were some soldiers who had probably killed a lion, or bear, or both, themselves. But nobody in that army thought they could kill the giant by the power of God! They only thought of what they could do in the power of the flesh. That is all they heard from each other. So that is all they believed. However, the flesh is not enough!

One reason we do not take a step in faith is because we are afraid to be like Peter. We do not want to step out on the water and sink. We would rather sit in the boat and critique Peter's lack of faith. But who are you, sitting in the boat? There is not a list in the text of the names of the critics in the boat. Anybody can critique, but can we do? I think it would be better to step out of the boat and sink then to sit in



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the boat and stink. I do not want you to jump out of the boat. Just think outside the boat to start. Then, ask Jesus, "can we do more than just sit in the boat and let the waves take us? Can we depend on more than the strength of the flesh?"

Another reason we do not want to step out in faith is that we do not want to look foolish. I'll bet the dreamer Joseph looked pretty foolish, tied up wearing rags, riding on a the back of a camel with the Ismaelites heading for Egypt. I wonder if his brothers bowed down in mockery of him as he rode away? Were there times when he was in prison that he might have said: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Have you let a crisis or a failure put your faith in a prison?"

But God came through for Joseph. He could never have imagined how God was going to do it. But God fulfilled His promise. Abraham and Sarah tried to imagine a way for God to fulfill His promise but they just messed it up. They made it hard on themselves but God made it right!

To the faithful who have served God for years, I commend you for your faithfulness. I respect and admire your work. You have laid a foundation that I believe God intends for a great work. However, I plead with you also. Do not limit what you believe God can do only to your own experiences. God moves when he is ready, not when we want him to move. What if, when Moses returned to Egypt, the people had said "we have been in slavery all our lives. Our fathers were slaves and their fathers were slaves before them. You have had an easy life, Moses; you have never been a slave. We have always been slaves and we will always be slaves.?" Or if when

Jesus spoke to the man at the pool of Bethesda the man had said "I have been sick 38 years; nothing will change." It was said of one town that not many miracles were done there due to their disbelief. I would not want that said of me, or us. Remember, Noah worked on that boat for many years. I'll bet when the rain came he was glad for the change!

If someone had approached you twelve years ago and said that by this year God would have over 5,000 Church of God believers in Africa, what would you have said? Would it have been something like "Oh sure," or "that's impossible!" Or "what's the plan?" The response would have been "Oh, there is no plan. God is just going to do it." You might have then written "kook" above the name of the person who told you. But yet, God has done just that. He did not wait for our plan; he just did it. According to the Bible, what are our limits? "I can do all things through Christ." (Phi. 4:13) Is anything too hard for God? Are you letting people be bigger than God? Jesus wants to set you free. Not just from sin but from disbelief and small belief.

Forgive me if I seem to get carried away at times. It is just that I have come to see that God was working even when I had given up. What greater works can He do, what disappointments can we avoid when we learn to walk by faith and not just belief? The Christian life can be tough at times but it is a lot tougher when we walk in weak faith.

I am not a giant slayer or a water walker. But if what I believe is important to God I know He does not want me to be a secret agent or hide in the luggage like Saul. There is no need to apologize for great

news!

What is Abrahamic Faith? It is believing that God has a special purpose for us. It is believing that He will not be denied. He is bigger than any man, god, or organization. To fulfill His plan does not require great numbers, just faith. Gideon's army of 300 in faith was much more powerful than his army of 32,000 in flesh.

Sometimes we need to just stop what we are doing and throw the net out on a different side of the boat. God is blessing us in some unique areas. I think He is showing us we need to change some of our thinking for His truth to grow. Does anyone want to be tremendously blessed? We need a missionary to Africa. We need to open ours minds to God's creativity.

I believe that God has already started a greater work in the Church of God. I see it in individuals and I see it in peoples. When I started to return to the Church of God another obstacle got in my way. I began to wonder, "God are you trying to stop me? Why would your Word tell me one thing and circumstances another?" Because God wants us to trust his promises, not the circumstances or situation. As I began to trust I began to overcome the circumstance. I still battle the circumstance but I will not settle for an Ishmael. Not when God intends an Isaac. The flesh alone can produce an Ishmael. But the Spirit will show us some Isaacs if we have faith.

Will you settle for Ishmael? Or do you want an Isaac?



In Defense of John the Baptist

Brian Wright

Brian is a member of the Restoration Church of God in Fayetteville, GA.

In Matthew 11:11 (Cp. Luke 7:28) Jesus addressed the crowds, "Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist!" What high praise John received from the man that Christians acknowledge as the Messiah. How curious then that many commentators have concluded that this great man is excluded from the kingdom of heaven!

William Barclay¹ is representative of commentators that hold this low view of John. Barclay writes, "So John had the destiny which sometimes falls to men; he had the task of pointing men to a greatness into which he himself did not enter . . . God needed John; God needs His signposts who can point men on the way, although they themselves cannot ever reach the goal."²

There are at least three major arguments that commentators generally cite to support such a view. I would like to review these arguments with you and put forward a defense that I believe will vindicate the first great preacher of the gospel mentioned in the New Testament.

Argument 1—Jesus said that John would not be in the Kingdom.

Jesus continues in Matthew 11:11b, "Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he [John]." If the least person in the kingdom is

greater than John then, so the reasoning goes, John must be excluded from the kingdom. While this appears to be a logical inference, it is in fact based on a faulty understanding concerning the establishment of the kingdom.

That the kingdom will be established on the earth at the second advent of Jesus, at an unspecified time yet in the future, is taught for example in the parable recorded in Luke 19:11-27. As Jesus neared Jerusalem the crowd "supposed that the Kingdom of God [a phrase synonymous with the phrase kingdom of heaven] was to appear immediately." They would not have supposed this if Jesus had already established the kingdom. The simple point of the parable is that Jesus will not establish his kingdom and reward his followers until he returns.

John the Baptist was executed before the entrance into Jerusalem described in Luke 11 occurred. This fact alone is sufficient to confirm that the kingdom of heaven, proclaimed by the prophets, including John the Baptist, by Jesus and by his disciples and apostles, was not established in John's lifetime. It is an event that is even yet to be realized in the future.

Commenting on Matthew 11:11b, George N. H. Peters³ writes, "Our Saviour, undoubtedly, refers to the kingdom of heaven as it will be established at His Second Advent . . . for the church is only preparative to that still future, coming Kingdom, in which the least that inherits is greater in

official standing, more highly honored, than John was in his official position."⁴ Peter here insists that the establishment of the kingdom, and its inheritance by faithful believers, is a future event.

He also brings to our attention a crucial point that we absolutely must catch if we are to properly understand Jesus. A comparison is being made between the status of persons that will inherit the kingdom in *the future age to come* with the high status of John the Baptist in *this current evil age*. Peters makes this clear by adding, "reference is made to those who actually inherit the Kingdom; who have actually become, and realize their honor and glory as kings and priests; who will then be greater than John in every respect, while John, also, in that Kingdom will occupy a still higher position than the one sustained at the First Advent."⁵ Far from excluding John from the kingdom, Jesus was actually awing and inspiring the crowd by describing the future greatness that believers will obtain when they inherit the kingdom that both he and John proclaimed.

Argument 2—John will not be in the kingdom of heaven because he doubted the identity of Jesus

Matthew 11:2-3 (Cp. Luke 7:18-19) records that when John was imprisoned by King Herod Antipas of Galilee, he sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus "Are you the expected one, or shall we look for someone else?" What motivated John to have his disciples ask Jesus these questions?

In his commentary, Barclay gives



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several possible answers to this question, but appears to lean toward the one which affirms that John had doubts about whether or not Jesus really was the Messiah. "He had been so sure that Jesus was the One who was to come . . . A dying man cannot afford to have doubts; he must be sure; and so John sent his disciples to Jesus with the question . . ." ⁶

It is certainly plausible that John, under severe stress from his imprisonment, and probably realizing that his life was in danger, may indeed have had some doubts. This would, under the circumstances, have been a normal human response. But if this argument is employed to support the speculation that John is excluded from the kingdom, then it must also follow that John did not repent of his supposed unbelief. Where is this unbelief in Jesus as the Messiah explicitly stated in the scriptures?

Peters offers another option concerning the motive behind the questions posed by John. He writes, "this was a most delicate way of asking why the kingdom was not established . . ." ⁷ Recall that Jesus gave the parable recorded in Luke 11 to show that the kingdom would not be established at his first advent. John was not alive when the parable was given. Remember too that the apostles, unlike John, were certainly aware of the parable and received instruction concerning the kingdom, even after the resurrection of Jesus, yet were still unsure about the exact time when Jesus would establish the kingdom.

The early Church expected the soon return of Jesus, culminating in the establishment of the kingdom and the rewarding of the saints. The uncertainty of the apostles and the early Church concerning the exact time when this would occur does not mean that they doubted or abandoned their Messianic faith. Why then would we conclude that John doubted or abandoned his faith that Jesus is the Messiah?

Peters adds, "John thus expresses his hope in the Kingdom, virtually saying: If, as I believe, Thou art the Messiah, why not establish the Kingdom and impart freedom; it was an appeal." ⁸ There is a tremendous difference between assigning doubt to John, thus confirming his unbelief and exclusion from the kingdom and assigning hope, thereby confirming his belief and future inheritance of the kingdom.

In Acts 1:6 the apostles asked Jesus, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" In light of the explanation offered by Peter, didn't the apostles essentially ask the same question that John asked through his disciples? Were not John and the apostles appealing for Jesus to establish the kingdom or to provide them with insight as to why it wasn't established?

In Matthew 11:5 Jesus instructed John's disciples to tell him "the blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel

preached to them." Peter explains the response from Jesus, "He does not reject John's Messianic hopes, but simply confirms His Messianic character by an appeal to His works—thus confirming John's faith in Himself as the Messiah without intimating when the Messianic expectations would be realized." ⁹

Now compare this with the response Jesus gave to the question posed by the apostles, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority." ¹⁰ Jesus did not admonish the apostles for asking about the establishment of the kingdom. Rather, just as he responded earlier to John, Jesus confirmed their faith in Him as the Messiah without intimating when these Messianic expectations, the same expectations held by John, would be realized.

Argument 3—The gospel preached by John was not the same gospel preached by Jesus

Barclay writes, "We have only to listen to the message of John and the message of Jesus. No one could call John's message a gospel, good news; it was basically a threat of destruction." ¹¹ This is an astonishing statement and a very serious charge. If true, then John is indeed excluded from inheriting the kingdom. In Galatians 1:6-8 the apostle Paul confirms that there is only one gospel and pronounces ". . . if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!"

Barclay has challenged us to listen



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to the message of John and compare it with the message of Jesus. It is only by accepting his challenge that we will be able to determine whether or not his final assessment of John is correct. I will examine only a few examples of scripture in this article. I encourage the reader to explore the scriptures in depth, confident that such an effort will only serve to confirm the consistency that exists in the proclamation of the gospel.

A direct correlation between the message of John and Jesus is found in Matthew. Concerning John we read, "Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, **Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**"¹² Now compare this with Matthew's statement on the preaching of Jesus: "From that time Jesus began to preach and say, **Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**"¹³ These two scriptures should be sufficient to demonstrate that the message preached by John is consistent with the message preached by Jesus.

We must also examine the concern expressed by Barclay that John's message was a threat of destruction and seek to discover if the message Jesus preached contained a similar threat. John indeed warned the Pharisees and Sadducees, "The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."¹⁴ Jesus echoes the same warning in his sermon on the mount, "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."¹⁵

That his message continues to contain a threat of destruction for those that will not believe the gospel can be seen in his commissioning of the disciples, "And he said to them, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned."¹⁶ Many more examples may be cited to show that both the message of John and the message of Jesus contain warnings of destruction for those that will not heed the message.

I conclude this article with a parable given by Barclay and an admonishment given by Peter. I employ them to serve as closing arguments for your consideration.

Barclay writes,

"Someone tells how from the windows of his house every evening he used to watch the lamp-lighter go along the streets lighting the lamps – and the lamp-lighter himself a blind man. He was bringing to others the light which he himself would never see."¹⁷

A tragic story and perhaps one that all teachers and preachers might do well to remember. The real tragedy however is that Barclay applies the story to illustrate the life of John the Baptist.

Peter writes, "Any theory of the Kingdom which makes the first great preacher of the Kingdom—a preacher specially prepared, sent, and inspired—ignorant of the leading subject that he was

delegated, specifically commissioned to announce, is not only open to the gravest suspicion, but ought to be rejected as unworthy of God."¹⁸ With that the defense rests.

¹ (b. 1907, d.1978) served as a Church of Scotland minister and Professor of Divinity and Biblical Criticism at the University of Glasgow.

² The Gospel of Matthew, Vol. 2, 6-7

³ (b. 1825, d.1909) served as a Lutheran minister in the state of Ohio.

⁴ The Theocratic Kingdom, Vol. 1, 253

⁵ Ibid., 253-254

⁶ The Gospel of Matthew, Vol. 2, 3

⁷ The Theocratic Kingdom, Vol. 1, 262

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 263

¹⁰ Acts 1:7

¹¹ The Gospel of Matthew, Vol. 2, 6

¹² Matthew 3:1-3

¹³ Matthew 4:17

¹⁴ Matthew 3:10

¹⁵ Matthew 7:19

¹⁶ Mark 16:15-16

¹⁷ The Gospel of Matthew, Vol. 2, 7

¹⁸ The Theocratic Kingdom, Vol. 1, 256



The Five Love Languages

Gary Chapman

Gary Chapman, Ph.D., is a Christian author and hosts the nationally-syndicated radio program "A Growing Marriage."

Have you ever wondered why all the nice things you do for your spouse or children can go unappreciated? Did you know that each of us has a primary love language? For example if your primary love language is 'acts of service,' chances are that's also how you like to express your love. But if your wife or child's primary love language is 'quality time,' your acts of service and way of expressing your love will miss the mark. Once you identify and learn to speak your spouse, son or daughter's love language, you'll discover the key to a loving marriage and family environment. Love need not evaporate after the wedding, but in order to keep it alive most of us will have to put forth the effort to learn a secondary love language.

How can we speak each other's love language when we are full of hurt, anger, and resentment over past failures? The answer to that question lies in the essential nature of our humanity. We are creatures of choice. That means that we have the capacity to make poor choices, which all of us have done. We have spoken critical words, and we have done hurtful things. We are not proud of those choices, although they may have seemed justified at the moment. Poor choices in the past don't mean that we must make them in the future. Instead we can say, "I'm sorry. I know I have hurt you, but I would like to make the future different. I would like to love you in your language. I would like to meet your needs." I have seen marriages rescued from the brink of divorce when couples make the choice to love.

Love doesn't erase the past, but it makes the future different. When we choose active expressions of love in the primary love language of our spouse, we create an emotional climate where we can deal with our past conflicts and failures.

Brent was in my office, stone-faced and unfeeling. He had come, not by his own initiative, but at my request. A week earlier his wife, Becky, had been sitting in the same chair, weeping uncontrollably. Between her outbursts of tears, she managed to verbalize that Brent had told her that he no longer loved her and that he was leaving. She was devastated.

When she regained her composure she said, "We have both worked so hard the last two or three years. I knew that we were not spending as much time together as we used to, but I thought we were working for a common goal. I cannot believe what he is saying. He has always been such a kind and caring person. He is such a good father to our children." She continued, "How could he do this to us?"

I listened as she described their twelve years of marriage. It was a story I had heard many times before. They had an exciting courtship, got married at the height of the "in love experience," had the typical adjustments in the early days of marriage, and pursued the American dream. In due time, they came down off the emotional high of the "in love experience" but did not learn to speak each other's love language sufficiently. She had lived with a love tank only half full for the last several years. But she had received enough expressions of love to make her think that everything was OK. However, his love tank was empty. I told Becky that I would see if Brent would talk with me. I told Brent on

the phone, "As you know, Becky came to see me and told me about her struggle with what is happening in the marriage. I want to help her, but in order to do so, I need to know what you are thinking."

He agreed without hesitation, and now he sat in my office. His outward appearance was in stark contrast to Becky's. She had been weeping uncontrollably, but he was stoic. I had the impression, however, that his weeping had taken place weeks or perhaps months ago and that it had been an inward weeping. The story Brent told confirmed my hunch.

"I just don't love her anymore," he said. "I haven't loved her for a long time. I don't want to hurt her, but we are not close. Our relationship has become empty. I don't enjoy being with her anymore. I don't know what happened. I wish it were different, but I don't have any feelings for her."

Brent was thinking and feeling what hundreds of thousands of husbands have thought and felt through the years. It's the "I don't love her anymore" mindset that gives men the emotional freedom to seek love with someone else. The same is true for wives who use the same excuse.

I sympathized with Brent, for I have been there. Thousands of husbands and wives have been there—emotionally empty, wanting to do the right thing, not wanting to hurt anyone, but being pushed by their emotional needs to seek love outside the marriage. Fortunately, I had discovered in the earlier years of my own marriage the difference between the "in love experience" and the "emotional need" to feel loved. Most in our society have not yet learned that difference. The movies, the "soaps," and the romantic magazines



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have intertwined these two loves, thus adding to our confusion. But they are, in fact, quite distinct.

The "in love experience" is on the level of instinct. It is not premeditated; it simply happens in the normal context of male-female relationships. It can be fostered or quenched, but it does not arise by conscious choice. It is short-lived (usually two years or less) and seems to serve for humankind the same function as the mating call of the Canada geese.

The "in love experience" temporarily meets one's emotional need for love. It gives us the feeling that someone cares, that someone admires us and appreciates us. Our emotions soar with the thought that another person sees us as number one, that he or she is willing to devote time and energies exclusively to our relationship. For a brief period, however long it lasts, our emotional need for love is met. Our tank is full; we can conquer the world. Nothing is impossible. For many individuals, it is the first time they have ever lived with a full emotional tank, and it is euphoric.

In time, however, we come down from that natural high back to the real world. If our spouse has learned to speak our primary love language, our need for love will continue to be satisfied. If, on the other hand, he or she does not speak our love language, our tank will slowly drain, and we will no longer feel loved. Meeting that need in one's spouse is definitely a choice. If I learn the emotional love language of my spouse and speak it frequently, she will continue to feel loved. When she comes down from the obsession of the "in love experience," she will hardly even miss it because her emotional love tank will continue to

be filled. However, if I have not learned her primary love language or have chosen not to speak it, when she descends from the emotional high, she will have the natural yearnings of unmet emotional need. After some years of living with an empty love tank, she will likely "fall in love" with someone else and the cycle will begin again.

Meeting my wife's need for love is a choice I make each day. If I know her primary love language and choose to speak it, her deepest emotional need will be met and she will feel secure in my love. If she does the same for me, my emotional needs are met and both of us live with a full tank. In a state of emotional contentment, both of us will give our creative energies to many wholesome projects outside the marriage while we continue to keep our marriage exciting and growing.

With all of that in my mind, I looked back at the dead-pan face of Brent and wondered if I could help him. I knew in my heart that he was probably already involved with another "in love experience." I wondered if it was in the beginning stages or at its height. Few men, suffering from an empty emotional love tank, leave their marriage until they have prospects of meeting that need somewhere else.

Brent was honest and revealed that he had been in love with someone else for several months. He had hoped that the feelings would go away and that he could work things out with his wife. But things at home had gotten worse, and his love for the other woman had increased. He could not imagine living without his new lover.

I sympathized with Brent in his

dilemma. He sincerely did not want to hurt his wife or his children, but at the same time, he felt he deserved a life of happiness. I told him the statistics on second marriages (60 percent ending in divorce). He was surprised to hear that but was certain that he would beat the odds. I told him about the research on the effects of divorce on children but he was convinced that he would continue to be a good father to his children and that they would get over the trauma of the divorce. I talked to Brent about the issues in this book and explained the difference between the experience of falling in love and the deep emotional need to feel loved. I explained the five love languages and challenged him to give his marriage another chance. All the while, I knew that my intellectual and reasoned approach to marriage compared to the emotional high that he was experiencing was like pitting a BB gun against an automatic weapon. He expressed appreciation for my concern and asked that I do everything possible to help Becky. But he assured me that he saw no hope for the marriage.

One month later, I received a call from Brent. He indicated that he would like to talk with me again. This time when he entered my office he was noticeably disturbed. He was not the calm, cool man I had seen before. His lover had begun to come down off the emotional high, and she was observing things in Brent that she did not like. She was withdrawing from the relationship, and he was crushed. Tears came to his eyes as he told me how much she meant to him and how unbearable it was to experience her rejection.

I listened sympathetically for an hour before Brent ever asked for my advice. I told him how sympathetic I was to his pain and indicated that



The Five Love Languages

Gary Chapman

what he was experiencing was the natural emotional grief from a loss and that the grief would not go away overnight. I explained, however, that the experience was inevitable. I reminded him of the temporary nature of the "in love experience," that sooner or later, we always come down from the high to the real world. Some fall out of love before they get married; others, after they get married. He agreed that it was better now than later.

After some time, I suggested that perhaps the crisis was a good time for him and his wife to get some marriage counseling. I reminded him that true, long-lasting emotional love is a choice and that emotional love could be reborn in his marriage if he and his wife learned to love each other in the right love languages. He agreed to marriage counseling, and nine months later, Brent and Becky left my office with a reborn marriage. When I saw Brent three years later, he told me what a wonderful marriage he had and thanked me for helping him at a crucial time in his life. He told me that the grief over losing the other lover had been gone for more than two years. He smiled and said, "My tank has never been so full, and Becky is the happiest woman you are ever going to meet."

Fortunately Brent was the benefactor of what I call the disequilibrium of the "in love experience." That is, almost never do two people fall in love on the same day, and almost never do they fall out of love on the same day. You don't have to be a social scientist to discover that truth. Just listen to 10 country and western songs. Brent's lover happened to have fallen out of love at an opportune time.

In the nine months that I counseled

Brent and Becky, we worked through numerous conflicts that they had never resolved before. But the key to the rebirth of their marriage was discovering each other's primary love language and choosing to speak it frequently.

Let me ask to the question "What if the love language of your spouse is something that doesn't come naturally for you?" I am often asked this question at seminars, and my answer is, "So?"

My wife's love language is "Acts of Service." One of the things I do for her regularly as an act of love is to vacuum the floors. Do you think that vacuuming floors comes naturally for me? My mother used to make me vacuum through junior high and high school; I couldn't go play ball on Saturday until I finished vacuuming the entire house. In those days, I said to myself, "When I get out of here, one thing I am not going to do: I am not going to vacuum houses. I'll get myself a wife to do that."

But I vacuum our house now, and I vacuum it regularly. And there is only one reason I vacuum our house. Love. You couldn't pay me enough to vacuum a house, but I do it for love. You see, when an action doesn't come naturally to you, it is a greater expression of love. My wife knows that when I vacuum the house, it's nothing but 100 percent pure, unadulterated love, and I get credit for the whole thing!

Someone says, "But Dr. Chapman, that's different. I know that my spouse's love language is physical touch, and I am not a toucher. I never saw my mother and father hug each other. They never hugged me, Dr. Chapman. I am just not a toucher. What am I going to do?"

Do you have two hands? Can you put them together? Now, imagine that you have your spouse in the middle and pull him/her toward you. I'll bet that if you hug your spouse three thousand times, it will begin to feel more comfortable. But ultimately, comfort is not the issue. We are talking about love, and love is something you do for someone else, not something you do for yourself. Most of us do many things each day that do not come "naturally" for us. For some of us, that is getting out of bed in the morning. We go against our feelings and get out of bed. Why? Because we believe there is something worthwhile to do that day. And normally, before the day is over, we feel good about having gotten up. Our actions preceded our emotions.

The same is true with love. We discover the primary love language of our spouse, and we choose to speak it whether or not it is natural for us. We are not claiming to have warm, excited feelings. We are simply choosing to do it for his or her benefit. We want to meet our spouse's emotional need, and we reach out to speak his love language. In so doing, his emotional love tank is filled and chances are he will reciprocate and speak our language. When he does our emotions return, and our love tank begins to fill.

Love is a choice. And either partner can start the process today.

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Theme Article

The Faith of Abraham

Or the Abrahamic Faith

Pastor Emory Macy

Reprinted from *THE RESTITUTION HERALD*, November, 1976

Pastor Emory Macy pastored Church of God churches for many years and currently pastors the Advent Christian Church in Weiser, ID.

Many times I have been faced with the puzzle of how to distinguish the Church of God from other denominations with the same name. I notice that the letterheads of some of our churches use the phrase "The Faith of Abraham," while others use "The Abrahamic Faith." I know that any word and any choice of spelling is legal in a name. Names are for identification. Group names, or company names, usually identify the product or company. Church names identify the denomination, or the group affiliation. The phrase "The Faith of Abraham" contains a somewhat different identification than does "Abrahamic Faith." One emphasizes the thinking, the conduct, and the religious practices of Abraham. The other is the religious creed that prompted Abraham's actions of faith. Abraham believed in a God. In fact, he knew that there is a living God. He had personal contact with the one true God. Abraham believed God, and it was counted onto him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:3). Abraham had faith that God would keep every promise that he made. He had faith in the coming of the Messiah—the Messiah who was promised after man's initial sin (Gen. 3:15).

This promise was renewed to Abraham in God's covenant with him. This faithful patriarch had faith in a resurrection from the dead. His faith was so strong that he willingly offered his son on the altar of sacrifice. He believed that God could restore life to Isaac, either immediately or in the Messianic Age.

Abraham also had faith that God was planning to build a perfect city on the earth for the habitation of God's people. He is said to have searched the land for that city. He believed that he should be a citizen of that glorious city of God.

This man's faith was more than just a catalog of expected blessings. He understood that God expected action on his part. God taught him a lesson when Abraham tarried in the land of Haran. God ceased to guide and direct Abraham until he completed his assignment and arrived in the land of promise. Many Christians proudly say that they have the "Faith of Abraham." They may believe in the same living God, but only a comparative few enjoy Abraham's close personal relationship with God. Abraham learned that his faith in God increased each time that he met with the Lord.

Paul believed that Jesus rose from the dead, but he was convinced only after a personal meeting with the Lord on a desert road. A Christian grows in proportion to his desire so obey God's commandments.

The Abrahamic Faith

The "Abrahamic Faith" is a kind of creed for those who use it in their church name. The phrase needs brief statements to explain its meaning. When the explanations are made, they become a creed for the Christian. A creed is the spontaneous expression of one's Christian experiences. It is the testimony of one's faith. It binds together Christians who share common interpretations and experiences.

There is some value in a professionally prepared statement of faith. If it is carefully written, it may provide aid for the Christian when he is called upon to give a testimony concerning the doctrines of his church.

A creed should be written by each Christian. The fallacy of many prepared creeds is that they may be written by someone who is an expert grammarian. Such creeds may contain words and phrases that are meaningless to many people.

Each Christian should write his own creed. He should begin each statement of faith with: "I believe . . ." The writer may write them in detail, or as briefly as he pleases. He may write as many or as few statements as he chooses, but let him write them as statements of his own faith. Then let him use them when confronted with Bible questions.

We could pattern our own creed after Peter's statement of faith. When Jesus asked him, "Whom



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say ye that I am?" Peter firmly replied, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:15, 16).

Jesus commended Peter for his statement because Peter spoke from personal conviction. Peter's creed was not prepared or prewritten, but it has been quoted thousands of times.

Martha, the sister of Lazarus, spoke her statement of faith to her Lord. When she was questioned, "Believest thou this?" she replied with strong conviction, "Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world" (John 11:26, 27). We feel sure that Martha had further knowledge about other teachings of the Bible. When the opportunity arose, she was prepared instantly to testify of her faith in Jesus. She had the answer ready before she heard the question.

The blind man's creed left very little doubt concerning his faith. "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see" (John 9:25).

When the apostles gathered in Jerusalem to confer about the advancement of the gospel, they concluded their discussions with a strong creedal statement: "We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved" (Acts 15:11).

The Apostle Paul wrote his personal creed to the Church of God at Corinth. "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him

crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). Later in the same letter, Paul broadened his creed to believing in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. (See 1 Cor. 15:14.) At a still later date, Paul wrote a seven-point creed for the Ephesians: "There is one body, and one Spirit . . . one hope . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God" (Eph. 4:4-6).

Abraham's Creed

Whenever he is asked concerning the Abrahamic faith, this writer thinks of the promises made to Abram as a foundation creed for prophetic doctrine. Abraham's creed was based upon God's promises to him!

1) Abraham believed that God would make of him a great nation. After many years of marriage, Abraham was childless. Yet after having received the promises of God, Abraham became the father of no less than eight sons. One of his son-nations was given an eternal blessing (Jer. 30:11).

2) Abraham believed that God would bless him if he obeyed God's commandments for righteousness. Obedience to Jesus' gospel is the basis for Christian doctrine today. (See 2 Thes. 1:8).

3) Abraham believed that God would make his name great. Abraham's name appears some three hundred times in the Bible. It is second only to the name of Jesus Christ. The name of Abraham will be repeated in the kingdom of God (Luke 13:28).

4) Abraham believed that he and

his family would be a blessing to the world. Abraham was a blessing to the people of his day. Through Christ, Abraham's seed, we have the blessed hope of the future (Gal. 3:9, 29; John 3:16).

5) Abraham believed that God would bless the nation that blessed Abraham. God deals with the nations of the world according to their treatment of the Jews. Prophetically, this covenant will be the basis for the judgment of the nations when Jesus returns (Matt. 25:3-46). All of God's gifts to man become a curse to the holder when the gifts are abused or misused (Deut. 30:7,9).

6) Abraham believed in the coming of a Savior. "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Christ was born of Abraham's seed. Paul confirmed that Jesus is the world's Redeemer (Gal. 3:8-16). Abraham believed in eternity on the earth, "For he looked for a city . . . whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10).

7) Abraham believed that God promised a portion of the earth to his seed (Gen. 13:15). Later God gave him the earthly dimensions. Then he specified the time boundaries—an everlasting possession" (Gen. 17:8).

My Personal Creed

I believe that the church will be blessed with Abraham (Gal. 3:9). When Abraham and all the faithful are eternally blessed, we, the Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith, will be heirs according to the promises (Gal. 3:27-29).



Theme Article

What the Truth Means

Pastor Russ Magaw

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*Russ currently serves as
Associate Pastor at the Oregon
Church of God, Oregon, IL.*

Did you know that man's knowledge has been doubling every six months since 1970? With these words, my friend proceeded to show the swift and massive increase in knowledge that man has accumulated in today's world. Our great-grandfathers never dared to dream of men walking on the surface of the moon. Today's earth dwellers dare to dream of visits to Mars by the 1980s.

In the six months that Skylab has been flying around the earth, with three different crews, man's knowledge of the sun alone has doubled. Also, many valuable facts concerning earth have been discovered. These include the discovery of a large body of cool water in the middle of the warm Caribbean Sea, a find that will revolutionize the fishing industry. New fields of oil in the midwestern part of the United States, and large areas of water, thousands of feet beneath the Sahara Desert, have been visualized. This age of runaway knowledge may tend to make many modern men heady and high-minded because of the mind-bending learning. But how do our astronauts feel about the new knowledge that they have acquired?

Astronaut Pogue, one of the

astronauts flying Skylab III, said, "I finally came to the realization that I am a fallible human being. I have now a new orientation of almost a spiritual nature, and my attitude toward life is going to change." Astronaut Pogue's humility on the threshold of this knowledge illustrates the truth of Isaiah 40:28: "Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding." We can never learn all that God knows. Still, untold volumes can be printed to contain new learning, regardless of how many Skylab operations we put into space.

Commander Carr, who was in the same spaceship in Pogue, had similar thoughts as he finished the mission. He said: "People in our line of work, a very technical type of work, are inclined to move along with blinders on. This mission is going to change me."

When a national news magazine representative interviewed project director Dr. Berry, who has been with NASA ever since it was founded in 1968, he asked him this question: "Why are the astronauts coming back from space with a desire to change their lifestyle?" Here is what he said: "There is no question in my mind that when you get away from earth and see it as a small globe, from out there in space, it

changes the way you perceive things. The astronauts are basically machine-oriented men, they tend to be narrowly focused on their technical capabilities and their technical training. Then suddenly they find themselves looking at the earth in an entirely different way than they'd ever had an opportunity to do before. Each man has a different way of expressing his feeling. One turned to para-psychology; it was for another a deeply religious experience; others focused on earth's problems. They realized after seeing the earth from space how everything in the universe is linked together, that people must get along better, and that the environment must be protected."

What is the great truth that our astronauts have discovered because of their space travel—a truth that changes their lives? I feel that it may be the truth that we find recorded in Proverbs 1:7: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." The astronauts have found a new reverence for God as the source of knowledge. As a result, they are searching for the wisdom wherewith to use that knowledge rightly.

If we want to find wisdom and knowledge in our lives, we search for it in his Word, and find it in God. How will this newfound truth about God affect the lives of the astronauts? We really don't know—We can only



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wait and see. But they have touched a truth that you and I have had in our Bibles all of these years.

The same truth touched the heart of a poor country boy in this nation in the early eighteen hundreds. Because he accepted the truth about God in his life, he was able to lead this nation through the most stormy times of the century. That country boy became President of the United States. His name was Abraham Lincoln. He left with us a creed which begins: "I believe in God, the almighty ruler of nations, our great and good and merciful Maker, our Father in Heaven, who notes the fall of the sparrow and numbers the hairs of our heads." Abraham Lincoln was ruler of the United States, but he believed in a higher Ruler—one who ruled all nations.

It was the Prophet Daniel who first proclaimed this dynamic truth to the mighty Nebuchadnezzar: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: and he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setseth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding" (Dan. 2:20, 21). It is easy to contrast this truth with man's meager attempts at energy saving, as illustrated by our yearlong daylight saving time.

God is not only concerned with the great big picture of this

universe, "but the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matt. 10:30). Only God is capable of such love and concern for both the huge and the minute. The astronauts viewed the earth as a small ball, but were incapable of seeing each individual, not to mention each hair!

The second statement of Abraham Lincoln's creed reads: "I believe in his eternal truth and justice" Compare this with the statement of Isaiah 33:22: "For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us." God did not make the universe, wind it up as a clock, and forget it. He is concerned about insuring that the universe functions. As a king may enact laws for the good of his domain, so God has established physical and spiritual laws for the good of his creation. Even as a king pronounces judgment upon his subjects, and punishes disloyal citizens, so God's judgment of the universe results in salvation for the righteous and punishment for the wicked. God has always been King of the universe. In the world today, we hear that there are no absolutes, that everything is changing—our knowledge is changing every minute. But in Malachi 3:6, God says, "I change nor." He is the one absolute in all of this universe, He is eternal. His statements, his truth, and his justice will stand forever, No matter what men may do, God will have his way with his universe.

Abraham Lincoln also said: "I recognize the sublime truth announced in the Holy Scriptures, and proven by all history that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord." We find this in Proverbs 14:34: "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." Last fall, National Weather Service meteorologists predicted that we were in for a cooler than average winter. This prediction caused real concern about further drain on already low supplies of heating fuels. But during the January thaw, mystified meteorologists marveled about the mild winter that heavily populated areas of the country enjoyed. These weathermen have been baffled by the welcome change—what caused it? Perhaps further study of satellite and Skylab photographs will uncover plausible explanations. Possibly these discoveries will continue to help to ease the energy crisis. Perhaps all of these activities have come to pass at such a crucial moment in history because God is honoring the prayers and faith of a few righteous persons. Doesn't the truth of God mean something to us in the light of today's circumstances? The Psalmist stated that truth quite clearly: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD" (Pea. 33:12).

Lincoln's next credal statement moves us to humble reliance on God. "I believe that it is the duty of men to own their



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dependence upon the overruling power of God and to invoke the influence of his Holy Spirit. To confess their sins and transgressions and humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon."

If God so greatly assisted faithful people in this nation's energy crisis, will he not also assist lives that are open to the filling of his power, the Holy Spirit? God wants to get personal with us in everyday living. But that is only possible if we humble ourselves, confess our sins, and receive his mercy and pardon. The prophetic call to humility and repentance still rings forth in our hearts today. "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him: and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:6, 7).

With our hearts right before God, we are prepared to receive Lincoln's next statement: "I believe that the Bible is the best gift that God has ever given to man. All the good from the Savior of the world is communicated to us through this book." Paul commended Timothy "that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith

which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15). We need God's Word today. It tells us the truth about our need for salvation through faith in Jesus. Jesus admonished, and declared, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). The Bible points us to God through his Son Jesus. He is the One who satisfies every searching heart with truth about how God works in our lives now. Only through him does God get involved in our lives, and we get involved in his will.

With Christ in our hearts, we can say with Lincoln, "I believe God's will prevails. Without the assistance of that Divine Being, I cannot succeed; with his assistance I cannot fail." Can the King of the universe assist finite beings to work out his will? If he demands of us that we prove his will in our lives (see Rom. 12:2), dare we question his ability to work in us for his glory?

Instead of questioning God's power, we need to follow Lincoln's example by submitting our lives to his will. "Being a humble instrument in the hands of our Heavenly Father, I give thanks to the Almighty, and seek his aid." Lincoln was ready to be used of God, under God's will. He was ready to submit to it.

When Lincoln faced serious

trials in the White House, he did not make decisions on the basis of what he thought might be best. When he wrote the Emancipation Proclamation, I am sure that he spent a lot of time praying to discern God's will, that he might follow it fully. Hear him state it in his own words: "I have a solemn oath registered in heaven to finish the work I am in, in full view of my responsibility to my God, with malice toward none, with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives me to see the right, commending those that love me to his care, as I hope in their prayers they will commend me." Like Lincoln, you can commit your everyday work to God's will and be ready for the Master to use you (2 Tim. 2:12). God is not concerned only about the universe, the lives of presidents, and of astronauts, he is also concerned about YOU!

Will you stand back, Lincoln and the astronauts, to view the earth from a new perspective and say, "I believe that God's Will prevails. His knowledge is past understanding, and he's the one who is going to have his way on this earth. God is in control all of the time." Does the truth of God mean something to you? Will you accept his will for your life today?



Stories for the Family Altar

Ruth Lewis

Reprinted from *THE RESTITUTION HERALD*, July, 1974

Ruth Lewis, the late wife of John Lewis, former president of Oregon Bible College, was tragically killed in a car accident in 1978 with her husband.

But I Can't See

Parades are great fun. Sandy and Sammy could hardly wait because Aunt Jean had promised to take them to see a very special parade in a nearby town.

Sandy could be very pokey about getting dressed. That is, unless she had somewhere special to go. Then Sandy could get ready so fast that everybody was amazed.

"Hurry up, Sammy," Sandy called as she was standing by the front door. "We're going to be late. I want to be up front so I can see the parade."

"Aunt Jean isn't even here yet" mumbled Sammy, as he continued getting dressed at a leisurely pace.

"Here she comes now!" exclaimed the excited Sandy. She kept right on talking excitedly. All Aunt Jean and Sammy could do was to listen.

"I'll have to park back here. We can walk up to the parade route," explained Aunt Jean. "The streets are roped off, and I can't get any closer." There were many cars, and that disturbed Sandy. Many cars meant lots and lots of people. Sandy almost ran down the street. "Wait for us, Sandy," admonished Aunt Jean. "You might get lost, you know, and that wouldn't be much fun."

As they approached the parade route, Sandy looked so disappointed. There were hundreds and hundreds of people standing along the curb.

Some had brought lawn chairs, and they just took up too much room, at least, according to Sandy.

"I'll stand right here," said Aunt Jean. "I can see. There's room for one person up front."

Sammy knew that he would have to let Sandy have the spot along the curb. Now he was going to be the one who couldn't see! He leaned back against the trunk of a tree that was there, then he looked up. If Zacchaeus could, why couldn't Sammy? He whispered in Aunt Jean's ear, and she nodded "yes." She even gave Sammy a boost.

Sandy turned around just in time to see Sammy fling his leg over a convenient branch. She turned around to keep Aunt Jean from seeing the tear that trickled down her cheek. She'd been so anxious to get there early to get the best place. She knew that Sammy had really found the best place. When the parade started, all the clowns waved at Sammy. They threw him candy and balloons.

Sandy got some treats too, and she did enjoy the parade. But next year, well, maybe, they could find a tree that would hold them both.

Meet Zacchaeus

Zacchaeus was a Jewish man who cooperated and worked with the Roman rulers of Palestine. He was a chief publican. Some suggest that some other title may have gone with the position, such as "commissioner." Jewish people looked down on those of their number who worked directly for the Romans. Zacchaeus collected taxes. He lived in the town of Jericho. This town was favored by the wealthy Jews because it stayed warm there in the winter. Also, it was an import town, so Zacchaeus could collect a

lot of money in import duties, part of which became his fee. The rest was passed on to the Roman government. This work made Zacchaeus a wealthy man.

Evidently Zacchaeus had heard about Jesus and wanted to see him, just as did others in Jericho.

Up a Tree

Yes, Jesus was visiting Jericho, and a regular welcoming procession went out to greet him. They didn't block the street, but they lined it. What miracles would this man work in Jericho?

Zacchaeus joined the crowd, but he had a problem. Even though he had an important job and great wealth, he couldn't get a front row viewpoint. What could he do? He noticed which way Jesus was walking, and ran on ahead. He knew that he couldn't stand by the road and see Jesus. Someone taller than he would block his view. So he climbed a tree.

Boys often climb trees. Men sometimes do if they need to pick fruit or are planning to cut the tree down. However, distinguished men do not climb trees very often unless it is very important to them. It was very important to Zacchaeus that he should see Jesus.

Jesus saw this short, grown man sitting up in a tree. How would you have attracted the attention of Jesus? He didn't make appointments. People were always crowding around him shoving, touching, and bumping him.

How did Jesus know everyone's name? He didn't have to be introduced to people. "Zacchaeus" he said. Jesus called him by name.

(Continued on page 19)



From the Editor

Jeff Fletcher

“Job cried out in the midst of his suffering. “I cannot eat for sighing; my groans pour out like water . . . My life flies by—day after hopeless day . . . I hate my life . . . For God has ground me down, and taken away my family . . . But I search in vain. I seek him here, I seek him there, and cannot find him . . . My heart is broken. Depression haunts my days. My weary nights are filled with pain . . . I cry to you, O God, but you don't answer me” (3:23-24; 7:6, 16; 16:7; 23:8; 30:16-17, 20, LB). Notice that even with his depression, the Bible says, “In all this Job did not sin” (1:22). Moreover, God reproves Job's friends for accusing Job of sin and for their “failure to speak rightly concerning my servant Job” (42:7-8).

So the answer to our question is a definite yes: Spirit-filled Christians can experience emotional problems.

Those who adhere to the emotional-health gospel often believe that negative emotions are in themselves sinful. We need to ask them how they account for the displays of Christ's emotions. In the Garden of Gethsemane, he “began to be very distressed and troubled. And He said to them, ‘My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death’” (Mark 14:33-34). Jesus [experienced full human life] with all its frailties, yet he did not sin.

Paul writes with affirmation, “And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling” (1 Cor. 2:3). Later he wrote, “We were afflicted on every side; conflicts without,

fears within. But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus” (2 Cor. 7:5-6).

Consider this thought experiment. Give me the most saintly person you know. If I were to administer certain medications of the right dosage, such as amphetamine, thyroid hormone, or insulin, I could virtually guarantee that I could make this saint anxious with at least one of these agents. Would such chemically-induced anxiety be explained as a spiritual sin? What if the person's own body had an abnormal amount of thyroid hormone or insulin and produced nervousness? I have seen patients in this precise predicament.

While the church should never condone willful sin, it must learn to accept that people within it may suffer from emotional symptoms that are not the result of personal unconfessed sin, as many proponents of the emotional-health gospel suggest. We must take seriously Paul's injunction to “encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men” (1 Thess. 5:14).

What the emotionally wounded need is for the body of Christ to be a place of love, acceptance, encouragement, forgiveness, and compassion. They need a place where Christ is lifted high and God's Word is never compromised but also where there is openness to use all available methods of healing that are not contrary to his Word. This kind of environment will not only foster emotional growth, but it will make this healing effort a

spiritual service pleasing to God.”

Dwight L. Carlson, M.D., is the author of several books, including “Why Do Christians Shoot Their Wounded?” (IVP)

I share this with you in the hopes that, should you or someone you love be experiencing emotional struggles like depression not to feel ashamed. There is help available in the Christian Community and Medical Community. I was blessed to be helped by a skilled Christian Counselor, and so far, I've experienced increasing improvement. By the Grace of God, I've been able to return to my ministry and my duties. God is good. May our churches be grace filled places where open sharing can happen and healing can come from out of the depths of pain and shame. That is what the Gospel is all about.

In this issue of the Restitution Herald it pleases me to present to you a variety of articles dealing with Abrahamic Faith, Truth and Love. We hear from some long time defenders of the faith—Emory Macy, Russ Magaw and Sister Ruth Lewis, as well as some fresh new voices—Robert Bernheisel, Tom Colburn and Brian Wright as well as others who have helpful insights into our ongoing journey of faith as disciples of Jesus Christ and Heralds of the coming Kingdom of God.

Thank you for the privilege of serving as your editor.

Glory to God in Christ Jesus,

Jeff Fletcher, Editor



Abrahamic Faith Began In Eden

Tom Colburn

Tom Colburn is a recent graduate of Atlanta Bible College

The Abrahamic Faith actually begins well before Abraham in the Garden of Eden. Everything in Scripture has its roots in the Garden of Eden. This is where life came into being and where God's plan was set in motion. What happened in Eden set the stage for the remainder of human history. Six thousand years later, we still live in the wake of Eden.

The fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant is tied to the fulfillment of God's declaration to the serpent, "he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Gen. 3:15b. NIV). Abraham could inherit nothing without Christ's perfection of obedience and love in his life, followed by his subsequent victory over death's formerly endless grip on all mankind (including Abraham).

Christ crushed the serpent's head, and was risen by the One true God, Yahweh (the Father), pronounced king of the Age to Come, and given a name above all names. Jesus Christ became the new Adam, the perfected spiritual Adam, King of the World. This gave mankind (all those who accept and serve Jesus as Messiah and King), a life to be resurrected to. This answered the groanings of all Creation, desperately and instinctively yearning for a restored harmony between earth and its occupants and its Almighty, Creator God.

Focusing, as the Church of God of Abrahamic Faith strives to do, on the Kingdom of God in the Age to Come, appreciates the inextricable link all of history and remaining future has with the events in the Garden of Eden. The salvation and solution promised by Scripture in varied manner and style, all point to the reconciliation of man and God to that condition enjoyed by

the first couple pre-fall.

In the Garden God issued a threat and a promise, both posed as simple declarations: "In the day that you eat from it you will surely die" (Gen. 2:17), and "he (a man, offspring/descendant of Eve) will crush your (serpent's) head" (Gen. 3:15). God declared that disobedience (not following God), would lead inevitably to death. Indeed, on the day man first allowed doubt of God to stir them to independent action they were dead men walking. It was only a matter of time before they returned to dust from whence they came. But at the same time God declared that evil would be conquered by a man some day.

The Abrahamic Faith is confident that God is able to complete the work He set forth. God is trustworthy to keep His promises. God is a loving parent as well as a sovereign ruler. God will do what He said He'd do. God promised seed through Isaac, then God will fulfill that promise whether Isaac experiences death along the way or not. God will work it out. This was Abraham's faith. And we know that not only all the promises made to Abraham will be brought by God to full realization, but that the work begun in Eden will also not fail.

We look forward to the time when Jesus is King in residence and love, peace and justice have returned to planet earth and to mankind. And while we wait for that day, whether it comes in our lifetime or in that of our descendants, we live in obedience to the King who is the rightful and ultimate heir to the throne. And let us not be afraid to live and enjoy life to its fullest in this life, so long as we remain in subjection to the our King and to his and our God and Father.

Stories For the Family Altar

(Continued from page 17)

A Welcome Guest

Jesus traveled around with no advance reservation. He stayed only where he was welcome. Zacchaeus was delighted to have him as his guest. Of course the people in town complained. This man was a sinner, and Jesus must not be very wise or he would know. Yet, after Jesus stayed at his home, Zacchaeus was a changed man.

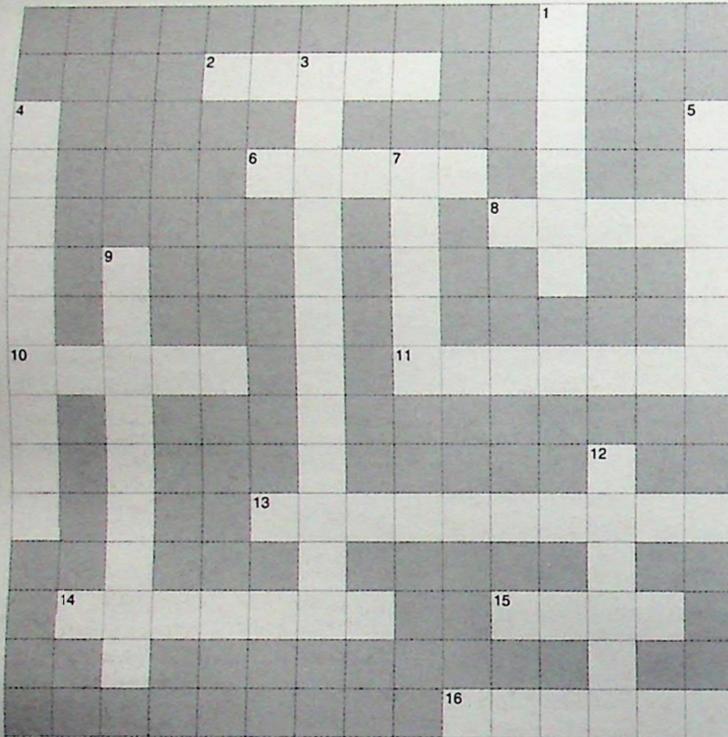
Zacchaeus vowed to give half of what he had and that was a lot. The law said that if you took money that he didn't owe you from a person, you had to pay it back twenty percent interest. Instead, Zacchaeus offered to pay back four times as much as he had wrongfully taken. That was what the law required for robbery, but Zacchaeus was no robber. He had learned a lesson from Jesus.

When you are a Christian you don't stop with doing good works that the law requires you to do. When you have the gift of salvation and have learned to love, you do more. You show your faith by doing what you are not doing only what you must do. When Jesus came to Zacchaeus' home, Zacchaeus was a sinner. After this experience he found salvation. Jesus didn't tell him to quit his job. Apparently he said something like, "Just love those people Zacchaeus, like I do."



Crossword

The Restitution Herald



Across

- 2. Abraham's wife
- 6. Genesis son almost sacrificed
- 8. Son of Man.
- 10. Location of the Kingdom of God.
- 11. The anointed one.
- 13. 1000 year reign of Christ.
- 14. Symbolic for eternal destruction
- 15. The first "son of God"
- 16. State of the dead.

Down

- 1. God's proper name
- 3. Release from death.
- 4. Jesus, in his relationship with God, accomplished this to perfection
- 5. Jesus' stepfather
- 7. Main character of Genesis 12.
- 9. The holy city
- 12. Who said, "What is truth?"

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Renewing Marriage & Family

Also in this Issue:

- The Christian and Government
- The Rock
- God's Will Be Done
- The Children's Page
- Crossword



From the Editor

Signs of the End Times



It's Summertime! Picnics, trips to the beach, and of course, it's the time of year when Hollywood comes out with its latest blockbuster movies. Most of what comes out of Hollywood isn't worth giving a second thought. However, I have noticed a common theme in some of this summer's offerings. If Hollywood is an indicator of what interests people, by virtue of how much money they are willing to spend, then it seems pretty clear that the public is interested in end of the world scenarios. Two of the big sequels are, the Matrix Reloaded and Terminator 3. Both of these big budget movies share a common premise. Man is fated to bring about the destruction of the planet through the misuse of technology.

Once you get beyond the initial irony that Hollywood is using an incredible amount of technology to create these films that warn us against the dangers of technology and the future of humanity, you get to the heart of the existential angst that is prevalent in the 21st century; we are headed down a path of self-destruction. One thematically consistent element in both stories is that we are out of control. Human beings have set in motion a course of events that has made it impossible for us to stop the path of destruction. We

are destined to self-destruction.

This, of course, is very consistent with the teachings of the Bible. 2 Peter 3:10 says, "The heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed." In light of this certainty, man is searching for a savior, a hero, a messianic figure who is capable of rescuing us from ourselves. In the case of the Matrix, it is Neo. In the case of the Terminator series, it is John Conner. Both of these men prove to be reluctant to fulfill their destiny, yet they are swept along by events that lead them toward their destiny. This can be contrasted with Jesus, the true Messiah, who made a choice to willingly go to the cross in order to fulfill his mission to be the messianic savior. Where Neo and John Conner embrace the use of violent force to defeat their foes, Jesus chose the path of peace, even when violence was perpetrated against him. He willingly went to the cross and did not resist the evil men.

Another notable contrast occurs in the Terminator story. The Terminator character, played by Arnold Schwarzenegger, goes back in time to rescue John Conner. Conner must be kept

alive in order to lead the resistance and save the world in the future. But Jesus must die in order to save the world. Whoever heard of the hero dying in order to defeat the evil foe? That doesn't make sense in Hollywood or in the world, but that is the truth of the Gospel.

Hollywood spends millions because it wants to make millions. They do painstaking research to discover what interests the average man or woman on the street, because they have a product that they are marketing. The continuing popularity of the end of the world films like the Matrix and Terminator series serves as a reminder to Christians, that there is an underlying fear among people that believe that humanity is going to destroy itself. A global holocaust seems inevitable. People everywhere are looking for a Messiah figure that will come and rescue us from ourselves. As Christians, we know who that messiah is, and we have the responsibility and the privilege to share him and his message with others. Let's get busy. Time is running out!

Jeff Fletcher
Editor



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EDITOR
 JEFF FLETCHER

PUBLISHING SPECIALIST
 JUSTIN TAYLOR

PROOFREADER
 SARAH BUZZARD

MAILING AND SUBSCRIPTIONS
 MARCY PREWITT

ADDRESS EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE TO:
 THE RESTITUTION HERALD, ATTN: JEFF FLETCHER, 130
 WAYNE ST., PONCHATOULA, LA 70454. E-mail:
 happywoodseg@i-55.com

**ADDRESS MAILING AND SUBSCRIPTION
 CORRESPONDENCE TO:**
 THE RESTITUTION HERALD, ATTN: MARCY PREWITT,
 P. O. BOX 100.000, MORROW, GA 30260 (E-MAIL
 ADDRESS: info@abc-cogge.org).

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- JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT. 16:16),
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- THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16);
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- THE NEAR RETURN OF CHRIST (ACTS 1:11), AND LIFE ONLY
 THROUGH HIM (COL. 3:3);
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- THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF
 GOD UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32);
- THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND
 ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER CENTRE NATIONS (ISA. 49:1-3);
- THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN
 BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE
 WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21);
- IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION
 IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS
 (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO
 SALVATION.



Theme Article

Renewing Marriage & Family

Ronald J. Sider

About the Author:

Ronald J. Sider, is a Professor at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Philadelphia and an author of several Christian books

Genuine Christians keep their marriage covenants and put children before career.

I want to tell you about my Uncle Jesse and Aunt Lydia, the woman he loved.

After five years of happy marriage, tragedy struck Lydia and Jesse's home. The day after the birth of their second daughter, mental illness invaded their lives. Lydia became increasingly disoriented and unstable. Eventually she lost touch with reality almost completely. It became increasingly impossible for Jesse to care for her at home. Finally, after several years of pain and struggle, Jesse had to take Lydia to a psychiatric hospital in Hamilton, Ontario. At first, he checked with the doctors each week when he visited believing his wife would soon be better.

"Your wife is not going to get any better," the doctor announced one day. "I think you should go home and start over. Take care of your girls, and forget about this woman."

"Well, Doc," Jesse said, "I can go home and take care of the girls, but I can't forget Lydia. She's part of me."

For almost thirty years, Jesse drove two hours to Hamilton every two or three weeks to visit the woman he had promised to love for better or worse till death parted them.

"Usually she was glad to see me," Jesse says. "Sometimes though, she would say she hoped I broke my neck on the way home. When that happened I'd go home and think, 'Well, what am I going to do? No use me going up there anymore.' And then I couldn't help but think about her. And in a week or two I'd be back up again, and I could get an entirely different response."

For many years, Jesse hoped and prayed that God would heal his wife. "Why she couldn't get healed, I don't know. That's one of the mysteries of this life."

In 1953, the doctors suggested a lobotomy (an operation in which a lobe of the brain is cut).

When Uncle Jesse saw her the next day, he marveled at the change in her. She asked questions about home and other things she hadn't talked about in years.

Jesse tried bringing Lydia home for a week or two, but it didn't

work well. Once she wandered away and walked to my parent's farm about four miles away.

"Some people were scared of her. It was a long pull there," Jesse told me.

My dad went along when Jesse sadly returned her to the hospital.

Months later, he brought her home again. This time, things went much better. The doctors had been testing various kinds of medication for Lydia and had finally found the right combination. After twenty-nine years, she was home again.

Her sloppy appearance and religious indifference were painful reminders that Lydia was not the woman Jesse once knew, but she was reasonable and cooperative.

For three years Jesse gently cared for the woman he still thought of as his youthful sweetheart and bride.

Then one Thursday, Lydia got sick to her stomach. A few days later, her appendix ruptured. Because of the lobotomy, she never felt the pain that would have warned her that something was wrong.

"Would you pray for me?" Lydia asked.

"I'm sure she was a Christian



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before her mind got warped," Jesse said, "but afterward she could think most anything. While she was home those last years, she never showed any spiritual emotion, that I could see. And now she said, 'Would you pray for me?'"

"I said, 'Sure, I'll pray for you.' The next day she died. I felt this was the Lord's time. It all went so peacefully."

I cried as I listened to Uncle Jesse tell the story of this marriage. "Did you ever feel angry at the Lord?" I asked.

"I did right at first," he replied. "I thought, this isn't fair—she was twenty-nine years old when this happened. But that doesn't get you anyplace.

"All those years, never once did I feel that she was a burden. Oh, she was a burden, but I never felt it was anything I should be relieved of. I loved her, and I did all I could."

"Do you think it would be harder today to do what you did?" I asked. "Thirty years back, divorce was seldom heard of, but today men abandon wives for far less reason."

"I can't understand the modern attitude," Uncle Jesse said quietly. "I chose a wife who I thought was it. Now why, after ten years, would I want to get rid of her for somebody else?"

"It looks like you've been asked to walk a difficult road," I suggested softly.

"Yes, especially if I had seen those thirty years ahead," he replied. "I took her to the hospital with the feeling that she would be returning in three months or so. It just didn't work that way. We walk with the Lord one day at a time.

Uncle Jess made a vow before God with the woman he loved to live in lifelong covenant for better or for worse. It got worse. But he kept that covenant, by God's grace, one day at a time."

Today's world feels like another planet. Adultery drives a sword through many marriages. In the United States, half of all recent marriages will dissolve in divorce. Increasing numbers of couples don't even bother to get married. Almost one-third of all children in the United States today are born to single parents. Less than 50 percent of the children in the United States will spend their full childhood living with both their mother and father. Anguish and tragedy stalk our homes in the form of abuse. We are doing to our children what no civilization in human history has ever done.

Careful scientific studies now prove what the Creator always knew. Children need their parents—both of them. Children

of divorced or unmarried parents suffer. In a trend-setting essay entitled "Dan Quayle Was Right," published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, Barbara Dafoe Whitehead recently summarized the shocking statistics:

"Children of single parent families are six times as likely to be poor. They are also likely to stay poor longer. Twenty-two percent of children in one parent families will experience poverty during childhood for seven years or more as compared with only 2 percent of children in two parent families . . . Children in single parent families are two to three times as likely as children in two parent families to have emotional and behavioral problems. They are also more likely to drop out of high school, to get pregnant as teenagers, to abuse drugs, and to be in trouble with the law . . . Many children from disrupted families have a harder time achieving intimacy in relationships, forming a stable marriage, or even holding a steady job."

Our society cannot survive for long with such pain and brokenness at the center of family life.

I remember a beautiful song composed by Clyde Hollinger



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called "You Don't Have to Fear the Storm." He wrote it for his little son who was terrified one stormy evening by the crack and roar of thunder. In the song, Clyde tells how he took his little boy in his arms, held him tightly and softly promised: "Son, you don't have to fear the storm, I will be with you all the time, you can trust my word." Half the fathers and mothers today cannot honestly sing that song. You cannot promise always to be there if you leave open the option of walking away from marriage when things get tough.

If Christians today followed Jesus rather than the world in our marriages and sexual practices, the Christian family would stand out in stunning starkness and appealing beauty. It would be like a cozy inviting living room warmed by a crackling fireplace in a frigid city paralyzed by a raging blizzard. Sadly, disobediently, Christians break their marriage vows almost as often as their non-Christian neighbors.

God forbid that my words cause anyone more pain. I weep over the anguish and torment of those who have been divorced. I know temptation and hardship bombard every marriage. I know many people face enormous hurt and horrendously difficult spouses in ways that I can hardly even imagine. I certainly believe that the Christian community should

support those who rightly separate for an appropriate time from an abusive spouse. And no matter what our sin, God stands eager to forgive all who repent.

But so many married couples give up too easily. Cheap divorce is widespread. In a recent movie, a father tried to help his little son understand why mom and dad were getting divorced. "Mothers and fathers just walk through the same doors at different times," the departing father explained. His little son's response speaks for millions of lonely, hurting kids: "Then why don't they wait for each other?"

How have we gotten into such a tragedy? What has produced the highest divorce rate in human history? There are lots of reasons. Many things have conspired together to make lifelong marriage harder now than it was for our grandparents.

New ideas broadcast everywhere with the persuasive power of modern media have undermined sexual integrity and marriage covenant. Modern intellectuals endorse relativism, claiming that one ethical idea is as good as another. Then the sexual revolution of the sixties spread the poison everywhere. Abstinence before marriage was mocked as puritan prudery. Open marriage and "loving" adultery are just two of many lifestyle choices served up by

the modern ethical supermarket and made "safe" by contraceptive technology. Every individual should seek their own self-fulfillment. If a spouse no longer meets your needs, some people think, you owe it to yourself to find someone who does. Personal self-realization overrides marriage covenant and parental responsibility.

Other changes have also been at work. Beneath the revolution in values lie powerful changes in the economy. I grew up on a farm where my mom and dad worked together and parented together seven days a week. That was the normal pattern through much of human history until the industrial revolution in the early nineteenth century. Then work and family separated. Men left home to work in factories and offices miles from home where mother was left alone to care for the children. The model of a breadwinning father working outside the home while a nurturing mother does almost all the parenting by herself is a modern development produced by the industrial revolution. One tragic result was that fathers lost many of their parenting opportunities and children lost close emotional ties with their fathers.

Modern science and technology also undermined the family in other ways. Previously, people usually lived in one community



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all their life, surrounded by relatives and friends who supported their marriage. With modern education, scientific specialization, and easy transportation, people began to move all around the country and even the world to find a job that fit their specialized skills. In the new location, the isolated nuclear family had far less community support for keeping marriage vows or sacrificing for children. At the same time fast food restaurants, microwave meals, and television destroyed regular family dinners—even for the nuclear family.

The material abundance produced by the industrial revolution seduced us still further. People became so preoccupied with more and more gadgets, products, and luxuries that they neglected personal relationships. Making money became more important than spending time with spouse and children.

Faithful marriage and wholesome family life are much harder today than they were for our grandparents. That does not mean they are impossible. In fact, if our society is to survive, we must do whatever it takes to restore marriage and family. But to do that, we will have to challenge not only our culture's ethical relativism, sexual promiscuity and easy divorce—we will also have to reject materialism and demand that

our economic institutions serve the family rather than undermine it.

Knowing all the powerful weapons Satan uses to attack marriage should give us tender hearts for broken people. We need to stand and weep with those who have failed, serving as the gentle messengers of God's overflowing forgiveness. God have mercy if those of us who have not experienced divorce give in to the temptation to be proud, self-righteous, and judgmental. If we are honest we know very well that we all face the same temptations. We all have walked close to the precipice. But we need not despair. Christian faith has the resources to restore the family and the joy of lifelong marriage covenant—if we are willing to surrender unconditionally to God's way.

Three Biblical truths are essential: Covenant must replace contract; the cross of self-sacrifice must replace personal self-realization; and individualism must give way to community so that the church can offer powerful communal support to marriage and families. These three—covenant, cross and church community—are the essential C's for Christian marriage.

First of all, *covenant*. What is the Biblical understanding of the marriage covenant? Genesis

2 is a fantastic story. Adam was not satisfied with the plants and animals and the things he could make. So God brings him Eve, bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh. Adam says, "Wow! That's what I've been looking for!" And their delight in each other was very good. The Bible says that the man and the woman became one flesh. They became one, permanently.

Matthew 19 helps us see more clearly what God was telling us in Genesis: Marriage is for life. It is a lifelong commitment. In Matthew 19, Jesus responds to a question about divorce. Quoting Genesis 2:24, Jesus says "one flesh." And then in verse 6 Jesus insists: "What God has joined together, let no one separate" (NBSV). Let no person tear apart this divinely established covenant of lifelong unity. Marriage is not just for good times; it is for bad times too. It is "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, for sickness and health, till death do us part."

Only when we understand the setting in Jesus' day do we grasp the full force of Jesus' teaching. In first century Palestine, divorce was easy—at least for a man. A clear law of Moses (Deut. 24:1) gave the husband a great deal of freedom to dismiss his wife. Jesus explicitly sets aside the Mosaic law and returns to the Creator's original plan. "It was because



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you were so hard-hearted that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so" (Matt. 19:8 NRSV). In Jesus' dawning kingdom, the disciples of Jesus should and can keep marriage vows the way the Creator originally intended.

Frequently, Jesus relaxed rigid ethical rules of his time. But here in the case of divorce he did just the opposite. To be sure, he permitted divorce in one case of marital unfaithfulness (Matt. 19:9). But his teaching clearly, pointedly excludes divorce for the vast majority of reasons people today abandon their spouses.

Jesus' standard is high. Large parts of the modern church flatly defy Jesus' teaching. Christians cannot hope to restore the family unless we are ready to return to the Creator's design. Are Christian couples today ready to follow Jesus rather than conform to the world? It will not be easy, but it is the only way to restore the family and recover the deepest joy in marriage.

At some point, the storms of life will roar through every marriage like a raging tornado. The best protection against giving up at that point is to be committed without reservation for the rest of one's life—"Till death do us

part." If that is clear then we will struggle, we will cry, we will pray and trust God to bring us through.

The world has a cheap substitute for the Christian marriage covenant. It is called contract. Sometimes the contract is explicit. Some couples approaching marriage actually work out a written contract. They agree on what each party will do. If the one party breaks the agreement and fails to keep their promises then it is okay to dissolve the marriage because it is just a contract. More often the contract is implicit. We do not say explicitly that it is just a contract, but it is. Let's see if it feels good. Let's see if it meets my needs. Behind those words, of course, is the hidden assumption of contract and the lie that self-realization should be our highest priority. If the other party does not meet my needs then the contract is broken. If I do not enjoy self-fulfillment, then the contract is off.

Society's limited marriage contract is not Christian covenant. It is the devil's cheap substitute. It is a fraud, a trick. Satan, of course, sells it to us with slick language and big promises. He says it brings freedom. He argues: "Society changes; you change; how on

earth can you make a lifelong covenant?" I want to shout to my children, to all of our children, to all of us: "Let us not be deceived by Satan's lousy substitute." Let us choose unconditional, solemn covenant made in the presence of the living God rather than a limited liability contract. In God's name, let us choose Christian partners who share that biblical understanding. And then, like Uncle Jesse, let's keep our vows, no matter what the world says and does. That is the only foundation strong enough to bring us the deep joy of continuing growth and lasting love over a lifetime of mutual submission and sacrifice. Covenant, biblical covenant before God, is the foundation of Christian marriage.

The second C is the cross. Anybody that has been married a few months knows there is pain as well as joy in marriage. We are all proud, petty, selfish sinners. We hurt each other, and then silly and stupid as we are, we try to cover it up or blame our spouse. We refuse to say we are sorry, even in the best of marriages, we hurt each other deeply. Finally, there is only one solution for that. It is a costly solution. It is the mystery at the heart of the gospel. It is the cross. It is costly forgiveness.



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Ronald J. Sider

Ephesians 5 says that husbands should love their wives the way Christ loved the church. (I'm sure Christ wants wives to do the same for their husbands). How does Christ love the church? He died for us. He put aside short-term self-fulfillment and embraced the agony of Roman crucifixion. Why? Not because we were so good. He did it because he loved us so much that he gladly sacrificed himself to bring us unconditional forgiveness.

That kind of costly love is absolutely essential for lifelong, joyful marriage. Betrayal, sin, and anguish will invade every marriage. At that point, as we saw in chapter 1, there is one good option and two bad ones.

One misguided choice is to let resentment and anger take control. Eventually that will destroy the relationship.

Another wrong choice is to pretend it really does not matter much. "Aw, shucks. It was nothing. In fact, I have already forgotten it." That of course is a lie. Pretense and cheap grace simply cannot restore reconciliation and intimacy.

Costly forgiveness is the only choice that really works. That is the way of the cross. Pain, betrayal, selfishness and sin in marriage do matter. They hurt like crazy. They tear us apart.

Costly forgiveness responds to the hurt in marriage the same way that God responds to sin. Sin is damnably serious. But at the cross, God embraces the punishment we deserve because God loves us in spite of our sinful failures.

That kind of costly forgiveness is the only way to stay happily married for a lifetime. When betrayal comes, we need to deal with it. We need to face clearly the full agony of this vicious javelin thrust to our heart. Sin needs to be confessed. Genuine repentance is essential. Then in time, by God's grace, we can also add: "Because I love you, I accept the pain of your betrayal and I forgive you." That is the only way for husbands and wives to rediscover reconciliation and joy after betrayal. You cannot pretend that you have not been hurt. You cannot wish it away. You can only embrace the pain and forgive. As repentance and forgiveness strengthen and reinforce each other, healing and reconciliation slowly grow.

How often do we need to embrace the cross in our marriages? Husbands are to love their wives and wives are to love their husbands as Christ loves the church. How often does Christ forgive you? Seventy times seven and seventy times seven. How many times has Christ forgiven you in

the past year? In the last ten years? In the last fifty years? That is the way that we need to go on forgiving our husbands and our wives.

That does not mean spouses should overlook persistent patterns of abuse and other sinful behavior. Rather than becoming co-dependent enablers, we must confront wrong. When separation becomes necessary, the Christian family should walk with both parties nurturing repentance, healing, and eventually reconciliation.

Costly forgiveness is closely related to covenant. The cross means never giving up. As long as we live, Christ stands before us offering forgiveness. God does not say, "I have had enough of you. I have had enough of your failures, stupidity, unfaithfulness, and sin." As long as we live God stands there pleading: "I want to give you another chance." Taking the way of the cross in our marriages, loving our spouses as Christ loved the church, means not giving up, even in the difficult, painful times.

This is not, I hasten to add, a recipe for agony and masochism. It is the only way to healing and joy. It is the only way to lasting happiness in marriage. Since pain and failure



Renewing Marriage & Family

Ronald J. Sider

will always come, even in the best of marriages, the only way to restoration and wholeness is costly forgiveness. The cross is central to Christian marriage.

A third crucial element Christian marriages need is genuine community in the church. Young people may think, "All this sounds scary. The demands seem very high." That is true. It is also true that the rewards are even greater. But when a lifelong commitment seems hard, Christians remember that we are not alone. In addition to the daily presence of the Spirit, Christians enjoy the love and support of the church. All of the other brothers and sisters in the body of Christ promise to help us. That is why we have church weddings rather than just going off by ourselves to elope. The wedding covenant is not merely a solemn pledge between God and two persons. It is also a communal vow witnessed by our brothers and sisters in Christ. By attending the wedding they all pledge to help us in our marriage covenant.

In Christ's body, if one suffers, all suffer. If one rejoices, all rejoice (1 Cor. 12:26). That means celebrating weddings and fiftieth anniversaries together in the body of Christ. It also means standing together in the tough times. That is what we promise every young couple

we watch walk down the aisle to be married in the church. We are responsible for each other's marriages. Everybody in a congregation is responsible if somebody's marriage fails. Did we pray or gossip? Did we cry or silently sneer? Did we gently counsel holding on or did we stay coldly silent? Did we offer costly help or let them struggle alone?

There are numerous ways that the Christian community could strengthen marriage and family. We need much more teaching for our children and youth about the beauty and joy of lifelong commitment in marriage. We need more premarital counseling. I wish that every church would announce that it will not marry anyone unless they have gone through several months of Christian marriage counseling. We also need better post-marital counseling. We need to share our marriage struggles in small fellowship groups and encourage each other to get counseling when necessary.

It is very easy to be too proud to do that. God has blessed Arbutus and me with a long, joyous marriage . . . there came a time when we very badly needed expert help. I must confess that I was too proud to do that for quite a while. I knew that many marriages around us were in trouble and needed

help. In fact, I was encouraging some of them to go for counseling! But me? Finally, when I hurt enough, I agreed. Thank God for those six months of marriage counseling with a gifted Christian therapist.

Satan is a clever liar. He says marriages used to last because people had no other option. They hated each other, lived parallel lives, and only stayed together because of custom. Now that is partly true and partly false. But a Christian community provides a solution to the truth in this charge. I do not believe God wants us to endure continuing agony in our marriages. A church that genuinely understands what it means to be the body of Christ will find ways to help each other work at the pain, the failures, the hurts in each of our marriages. Unless the church is ready to invest large amounts of money and time in helping its members discover new joy and wholeness in their marriages, it should not criticize the world or pretend that it has an alternative to the sexual and marital tragedy all around us. But the church today does know a better way. We know that lasting, fulfilling marriage starts with biblical covenant, is renewed by costly forgiveness and is strengthened by the warm embrace of loving sisters and brothers in Christ.



Renewing Marriage & Family

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Thus far, I have talked mostly about what Christians can do within the community of believers. But the larger culture could also significantly strengthen marriage and the family. Think of how different it would be if the influential people in art, education, and the media supported rather than mocked sexual integrity and marital fidelity. Imagine a situation where most people spoke and lived the truth that parents ought to be more concerned with parenting than career or wealth. Consider how much easier it would be if employers supported parental leave for new mothers and fathers and offered flex-time to encourage parenting and caring for the elderly. Even the right government programs (such as tax laws that favor marriage over cohabitation) could play a modest but significant role in strengthening marriage.

Fortunately, there are new signs of hope today in both church and society. For the first time in decades influential secular authorities are talking openly about the fact that children need both parents. More and more people are endorsing sexual abstinence until marriage. Broad coalitions like the National Fatherhood initiative are summoning fathers to renewed responsibility.

Within the Christian

community, the pro-family movement has grown strong. Organizations like Promise-Keepers are calling Christian men to be faithful husbands and available, caring fathers. Campaigns like True Love Waits are inspiring hundreds of thousands of Christian youth to sign pledges of virginity until marriage.

All that is promising. But it is only a beginning. Just imagine the impact if even a quarter of today's Christians modeled joyful, Christian marriages and families for the next two decades. There are few things that would have more evangelistic impact upon our world so full of broken homes.

I pray for tens of millions of Christian families whose joy and wholeness stand out in stark contrast to the surrounding darkness. In those homes, husbands and wives know that the best thing they can do for their children is to love and care for each other. They take the time and invest the energy to communicate honestly, repent when they fail, forgive each other, pray together, find delight in each other and submit to each other. They treasure family time more than promotions. They keep their vows even in the tough times. Their joyful, wholesome families demonstrate powerfully that the Creator's design for sex and

marriage is finally the only way to enduring happiness, peace, and yes, self-fulfillment.

Living models of that kind of joy and integrity would be a powerful witness in the midst of the pain in families today. Neighbors would watch carefully. Slowly, after making sure the joy is genuine, they would often seek the same wholeness and gladly embrace the same Lord.

In the next two decades, Christian marriage could become one of our most powerful means of evangelism. Today's hurting, broken families long for something better. We can offer them what they seek. But only if we first live it. Will enough Christians today follow Jesus rather than the world? Will enough Christians model such fidelity, joy, and wholeness in our marriages and families that the world will see and believe?

That can only happen family by family, person by person. God helping me, I pledge to treasure my wife and my children above work, money and fame. They have been God's best gift to me after His Son.

—From *Living like Jesus*
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The Christian in Relation To His Government

William M. Wachtel

About the Author:

William Wachtel is a retired Church of God Pastor as well as a former president of Oregon Bible College. He currently resides in Kettle Falls, Washington.

Believers who share the Abrahamic Faith sometimes find themselves in an awkward position as they interact with the government under which they live and conduct themselves as Christian believers. They know, for example, that they are obliged to pay their taxes—not only because the government requires it, but also because God has commanded them to do so (Romans 13: 6,7 NIV):

“This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God’s servants who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.”

The Apostle Paul, in this text, sees such Christian support of government as enabling rulers to deal with “those who do wrong” (v. 3), and to bear the sword against evildoers (v. 4). In carrying out these functions, the ruler is even called “God’s servant” and His “agent of wrath to bring punishment on Christians are called upon to “submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience” (v. 5).

The God-given authority of human governments has sometimes created a dilemma for Christian believers. On the one hand, they wish to obey the Scriptures by being submissive to their rulers and the laws of their nation. On the other hand,

historically speaking, the rulers and nations have not infrequently called upon citizens or subjects to obey laws or commands that Christians find contrary to Scripture and to the conscience. Such a situation appeared early in the history of the church, when the apostles were commanded by the Sanhedrin, Israel’s highest authority under Rome, “not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus” (Acts 4:18). This command was issued a second time, after the apostles had disobeyed it and had continued to preach the gospel (Acts 5:40). On both occasions, the apostles gave a classic reply to their government’s unjust command:

“Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God . . . WE must obey God rather than men!”

An example of a similar dilemma for modern-day Christians may be cited from recent European history. Hitler’s Nazi government required Germans to carry out acts of atrocity against Jews and others. Some German Christians refused to obey such orders and were imprisoned in concentrations camps, or executed for their disobedience. They felt that obedience to God under such circumstances required them to disobey the government—and they suffered the consequences! They became martyrs for righteousness’ sake.

Their disobedience did not cause them to take up arms against Hitler or to foment rebellion against the government. Rather, since they could not obey a wicked and unjust command, they chose to submit themselves to the punishment that

was inflicted upon them for their disobedience. In doing so, they in fact fulfilled the Scriptural requirement to be “submissive” to their government. There is an important difference, then, between “submission” and “obedience.” All obedience implies submission, but not all submission implies obedience. Some submission involves accepting punishment when one cannot render obedience. The apostles are a clear example of how and when to disobey a ruler’s command. They disobeyed because the command was contrary to the will of God, and their attitude in accepting punishment was a worthy example to all believers. After they were flogged for disobeying, “the apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name” (Acts 5:41).

Living in This World

The Christian’s dilemma as regards obedience to his government arises from the nature of human government itself. Though ordained of God to maintain order and put down wickedness (almost any government is preferable to anarchy and the resulting chaos!) yet the rulers themselves are but sinful men who may care little or nothing for the God who ordained and empowered them. All human governments are, in fact, an integral part of what Scripture calls “the world.”

When Satan showed Jesus “all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor” (Matt. 4:8), he declared, “I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if you worship me, it will all be yours” (Luke 4:6,7). The



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Lord rejected Satan's offer, but he didn't challenge Satan's claim to authority over "the world" and its governments. In fact, he later called Satan "the prince of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), as a recognition of that authority. In this sense, then, "the world" is the system of human governments which God has ordained but which Satan at present controls to a great extent through human sinfulness and demonic principalities.

To make a valid evaluation of one's relation to this system, a Christian believer needs to remember that Christ declared that his people are "in the world" but are not to be "of the world" (John 17:13-19). What does this imply? To me it means not only that we are to keep ourselves pure from the pollutions or corruption of the world's sinful ways (2 Peter 2:20), but also that we are in some way to hold ourselves separate from the governments of this world—which, as we have seen, form an integral part of what Jesus calls "the world."

When Paul discusses government in Romans 13, he consistently makes a clear distinction between the persons who are the rulers and the Christian believers who are "the ruled." No room is left in his discussion for the possibility that Christians may in fact come to be among the rulers. One may argue that this was not possible in Paul's time, since democracies as we know them did not exist then. So, some argue, under our democratic form of government Christians must take their part in the government—voting, running for office, serving as magistrates, taking part in the military, etc. But if "the world" of governments still exists and if Satan

is still "the prince of this world," it is hard to see how Christians can justify their involvement in these governmental activities and functions without violating Christ's wish that they be not "of" the world even while they are "in" it!

Those of us who live in such a democracy should thank God that we are permitted by our government to live lives of separation, not being forced to involve ourselves in its functions. Even the matter of participation in military service is allowed to be a matter of conscientious decision on the part of each person. This freedom we enjoy was not given to the early Christians. History records that when Roman soldiers came to believe in Christ and his gospel and realized that he taught nonviolence as a way of life, they refused to fight anymore and were condemned to death as insubordinate. These brave men, now "soldiers of Christ" (2 Tim. 2:3,4), submitted to execution, rather than disobey his command. It was "The Great Apostasy" of the church, reaching a climax in the time of Emperor Constantine, that united church and state and paved the way for the church members to serve in the army and to become functionaries in the government itself. These are simply facts of history that can be verified by anyone who searches for truth.

At the time of the Reformation, the Anabaptists—fore-runners of those today who seek to base their faith and practice on the Bible alone and not on the traditions of the Great Apostasy—broke with Luther, Calvin, Zwingli and other reformers over this very issue of Christian participation in the government.

They longed to return to what they perceived as New Testament separation from the world. For this stand they were bitterly persecuted and martyred by the Protestants as well as the Catholics. The Protestant reformers were unwilling to accept this "radical reformation" and chose to continue in many of the traditions they had learned as Catholics in regard to the union of church and state.

In this twenty-first century we as Christian believers still have to make a crucial decision regarding our relationship to the government under which we live. Will we become part of it by our involvement in directing its activities and/or participating in its functions that require force or violence, or will we remain separate from all this, seeking to live "peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness" (1 Tim. 2:2)? If we make the latter decision, as I believe we should, we still have a responsibility to pray for our rulers and for all who are in authority (v.1). Besides this, God requires us to support our government with our taxes. He also expects us to be law-abiding members of society, submitting "for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men" (1 Peter 2:13). All of this is a "tall order," but it is possible to obey it if we seek to be yielded to the Word of Christ, to the will of God, and to the power of the Holy Spirit that works within us as Christian believers.



The Rock

Linford Moore

About the Author:

Linford Moore is a retired Church of God Pastor, currently residing in Waterloo, Iowa.

Every morning as I look out my home window and look across the street there sits this big boulder. It's always there. The idea of a rock appears in various advertisements, "a piece of the rock," "like a rock" giving the sense of security and durability.

Biblical illustrations of God are several, for example, hiding place, fortress, refuge, shelter, deliverer, high tower, shield. A most significant illustration of God is Rock. Our Scripture selections all draw from this uniform word picture.

In Deuteronomy 32:1-4 we read of the character and ways of God. He is great, perfect, true, just, right. These things indicate His absolute trustworthiness, holiness, righteousness. "He is the Rock."

Continuing in Deuteronomy 32, verses 9-14, God's blessings are here described for His Israel. God speaks and causes them to "suck honey out of the rock." The Psalmist (19:7-11) elevates the word and working of God's ways. "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than fine gold: sweeter also

than honey and the honeycomb." They hold the prospects of "great reward."

But Jeshurun—figurative designation of Israel as His darling upright—forsook God and lightly esteemed the Rock of their salvation. Read Deuteronomy 32:15-17. They did not take Him seriously but instead adopted other gods and religions.

Deuteronomy 32:18 reveals that they forgot the Rock, God their Creator. Psalm 100 was written, lest they forget who made them. These things were written for our admonition, lest we forget. The victorious life is of one clinging to the Rock.

When Hannah's prayer was answered, she worshipped in her words, "neither is there any rock like our God (1 Samuel 2:2). Accordingly, David sang to the God of his rock (2 Samuel 22:1-7) and held the expectation that "he shall set me upon a rock" (Psalm 27:5). "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I," he declared (see Psalm 61:1-4).

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee" (Isaiah 26:3). "Perfect peace" in Hebrew reads "shalom shalom," rendering an elegant emphasis. Philippians 4:4-7 tells us how to achieve

and receive "the peace of God, which passes all understanding." This peace from God and through Jesus is much different than that found in the world's peace.

"Trust ye in the LORD forever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength" (Isaiah 26:4). "Everlasting strength" in Hebrew means "rock," "the rock of ages."

Israel's faith in Jehovah was to also look forward "that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4). That Rock became the foundation as "the Christ, the son of the living God" (Matthew 16:15-18). Whoever hears Jesus' sayings (as Jesus spoke only those words he learned from his heavenly Father) and does those sayings is founded securely upon that rock (Matthew 7:24-27).

"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength (Hebrew "tsur"—rock) and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:14).

—Fall Iowa Church of God Quarterly Conference, 2002, Gladbrook, IA.



God's Will Be Done

E. O. Stewart

About the Author:

E. O. Stewart was an early Church of God Pastor and an evangelist for the Texas COG Conference.

From THE RESTITUTION HERALD, February 15, 1921

“Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven” (John 17).

This is the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to pray. It seems strange that some people think that this prayer will never be answered. We all agree that the angels in heaven obey God's will perfectly, but it seems hard for people to believe that this earth will be the future home of man. They seem to think that when a man becomes a Christian he is doing God's will, and that this is what is meant by His will being done in earth as it is in heaven. Sure it is God's will for people to obey Him, but that is not all of His will. In John 6:39 we read: “And this is the Father's will which sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the Last Day.”

What will the Father give him? Luke 1:31, 33 says, “And the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his Father David.” We understand that the throne of David is included in the things, which the Father will give unto his Son. This is the Father's will and will be accomplished when Christ returns, because in Acts 15:16 he says, “I will return and build again the tabernacle of David that has fallen down.”

Amos 9:11 says, “In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that has fallen down, and I will build it as in the days of old.” When will he raise it up again? Amos 9:11 says, “In that day.” John 6:39 says, “at the Last Day,” and Acts 15:16 says he will return and do this. So the phrases, “In that day” (Amos 9:11), “at his return” (Acts 15:16), “and at the Last Day” (John 6:39), all mean the same time. When Christ arose from the dead he said, “All power is given unto my hands” (Matt. 28). But this power was only appointed, and at the appointed time he will exercise that power. For instance, read Heb. 2, where Paul after affirming that all things are put under him says, “But now we see all things put under him. For unto the

angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come whereof we speak.”

Christ has received his appointment to the office of king. God the Father appointed him to fill that office. By way of illustration we may take Mr. Harding. He has been elected, or appointed, to the presidency. This election took place last November. His inauguration to that office will take place in March, at the appointed time. Sometime between his election and his inauguration he must select, or appoint, his cabinet officers. He is to make his selection of the best-qualified men he can find to assist him in his official duties. It would be unwise of him to select men who had not qualified themselves for the offices.

So with Christ, He was appointed by the Father to the office of king over the nations when he had done what God sent him to do. Sometime between the time of his appointment and his inauguration, he must make his appointment of cabinet officers. It would be unwise of him to select people for this who had not qualified themselves to assist him in his official duties. So we hear



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him beginning his appointment before he left here. He said, "As my Father hath appointed unto me a kingdom, so I appoint unto you a kingdom that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit upon thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:29). "Unto him that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations" (Rev. 2:26). "If we suffer we shall also reign with him" (2 Tim. 2:11).

So here are the conditions laid down as to our qualification. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection, on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Rev. 2:6). "Behold a king shall reign in righteousness and princes shall rule in judgment" (Isa. 32:1). But not until the Lord comes again. For God hath appointed a day to judge the world in righteousness by that man Christ Jesus whom he hath appointed (Acts 17:30). Judge nothing before the time until the Lord come (1 Cor. 4:5).

"Behold a king shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment

and justice." Where? "In the earth" (Jer. 23:5). "As God hath appointed a day for judgment" (Acts 17:30). And as Paul in 1 Cor. 4:5 says, "Judge nothing before the time until the Lord come." We can safely say that the prayer which Christ taught his disciples to pray will be fulfilled when Christ comes. He shall sit upon his throne when he comes (Matt. 25:31). The twelve shall sit upon twelve thrones when he shall sit upon his throne (Matt. 19:28). In mercy shall the throne be established and he shall sit upon the throne in the tabernacle of David judging (Isa. 16:5). He will not judge until he comes (1 Cor. 4:5), therefore he will not sit on his throne until he comes again. That glorious government which shall be placed on the shoulders of Christ (the prince of peace) will be the answer to the prayer recorded in John 17. Prophets of old, looking by faith, could foresee the fall and rising of the empire after empire, and see beyond the dark visage of human woe, to a land made free from the curse of sin and death, when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Hab. 2:14). Where tears will all be wiped away, and

where peace and joy shall be the fruits of our toil.

O think of such glorious times! In the sunbright clime of Eden restored. When the once pale, faded cheeks shall be rosy again, when the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. No more sunken eyes and wrinkled brows because of age. No slow, creeping hearses and funeral trains to sadden our hearts; no more sad news of death of father or mother to be sent over the telegraph wires.

But in that sweet home, life unending shall be the portion of those who have directed their frail barge over the dark and troublous waters of life into that rest that remaineth for the people of God.

*We can see the glory
shining
On the sunny hills of peace,
We can catch the balmy
breezes from the land.
Soon earth's stormy voyage
of sorrows
And its warring strife shall
cease,
For God's everlasting
kingdom is at hand.*

*By the grace of God, may
we all reach it.*



The Children's Page

Marion J. Stilson

About the Author:

Marion (Otto) Stilson is a 1953 graduate of Oregon Bible College.

From THE RESTITUTION HERALD, May 8, 1951

Dear Boys and Girls:

Today, you will read about a little girl of the Bible who helped a sick man. This girl did not wait until she was big to help someone. You and I can do things, even little things, to help others, too. The story is found in Second Kings 5.

A little girl, who was a slave, lived in the land of Syria. She was a Jewish girl and worked for an older woman, like you help your mother sometimes.

One day, the husband of the mistress for whom she worked became sick. Naaman, the man who was not well, had leprosy. The little girl said to her mistress, "If Naaman were brought to the prophet of God in Samaria, he could be healed of his leprosy." Now the prophet of God was Elisha, and he could heal persons who were sick.

Naaman was told what the maiden had said. A letter was

sent to the king of Israel, where Elisha lived. The letter reported that the king of Syria was sending Naaman to be healed of his sickness. When the king received his letter, he was afraid. He did not know how to heal anyone. He must have forgotten that Elisha could. He thought the king of Syria was playing a trick on him.

Elisha heard that the king of Israel was sad. He went to him. Elisha told him to send Naaman, and he would heal Naaman. When Naaman came to Elisha's house, he expected Elisha to touch the leprosy. What do you suppose Elisha told him to do? He merely told him to dip in the muddy waters of the Jordan River seven times. Can you imagine someone telling you when you are sick to dip yourself in the nearest river not once, but seven times? Miserable Naaman could not imagine that either!

Perhaps Naaman grumbled every time he dipped himself under the water. Perhaps he thought about the little maiden who had told him to come to Elisha in the beginning. One, two, three, four, five, six times he went under water. After the seventh time, his skin became

healed and was as soft as a little child's skin. How happy he must have been! He was healed because a little girl had told him about Elisha. He learned that there was one God, too.

The maiden had not done the healing. Elisha did the healing through God's help. All the little girl did was say a few words. Today, boys and girls, you cannot expect to heal persons. You can expect to do smaller deeds, like the maiden. Singing a song of Jesus is an easy act to do. Someone, maybe your friend may learn of Jesus that way. Even an older person may realize that Jesus is your Helper and Master by hearing you sing. You can help God by saying kind words every day. Will you be a helper like the little maiden was?

As you become men and women, remember the little maiden. Whether you are a preacher, pilot, nurse, farmer, or a missionary, if you go to [Atlanta] Bible College or another college, you must remember that little deeds may be as important as big deeds. *The little girl helped Naaman by a small deed, but he was healed.*



How God Forms or Re-forms Us

Jeff Fletcher

About the Author:

Jeff is currently pastor at Happywoods Church of God, Hammond, LA.

There are roughly 6 billion humans living on the earth right now. Countless billions have already lived and died. Who knows how many billions more will live before the end of this age? That's a lot of people. My mind can't even begin to comprehend that many people.

Most of us have different fingerprints, different DNA. We look different, think different, act different. Some have blonde hair and blue eyes. Some have dark hair and dark skin. Some have red hair and freckles. God made us each unique. His image is stamped on each one of us. God loves every single one of us. It's God's will that every last one of us would turn to Him and receive from Him the gift of eternal life in His Kingdom.

But there's a problem. It's called sin. Many people love the pleasures of sin more than they love God. Many choose to be enslaved by the devil rather than experience the freedom of living life as a child of God.

Fortunately, God doesn't give up easily. God is not a quitter. God keeps on working from the moment we emerge from our mother's womb until such time as we breathe our last breath. Jeremiah uses the image of a potter to refer to God. God shapes us, He fashions us, and He forms us. There are 3 ways by which God forms us.

God forms us by teaching us

lessons from the past, by His Holy Word. God forms us by giving us present day examples and opportunities to change. God forms us by providing us with hope for the future if we turn to Him, and warns us of judgment if we do NOT turn to Him.

God Forms us by teaching us lessons from the Past. In 1 Corinthians 10:6 Paul teaches that Israel is our example of what NOT to do. In vs. 11, the Scriptures (stories about Israel) were written to instruct us. We are warned not to make the same mistakes that they made. "If we fail to learn the lessons of the past we are destined to repeat them." They worshipped idols, false gods. They indulged in sexual immorality. They tested the Lord. They were grumblers and complainers. We can learn from the past to not repeat their mistakes.

God forms us by giving us present-day examples and opportunities to change. In Luke 13:1-5, Jesus used two contemporary examples to warn the people about their need to repent. We could easily do the same thing. Regarding those killed on September 11, 2001; do you think they were any more sinful than we are? Those who are dying of AIDS, are they worse sinners than we are? Those who die in cities each day from violence, and drug trade, are they worse sinners than we are?

When we see tragedy enter into the lives of others, we should not use that tragedy as a reason to judge that person as being a sinner. This was a game that many people played in Jesus' day. They must have done something to deserve

such tragedy. Consider poor Job. His family and fortune and health were wiped out almost overnight. His "friends" came to "comfort" him and asked what he'd done to God to deserve such suffering. We often consciously or unconsciously do the same things. That's why people love gossip magazines. They love to savor the salacious stories of other people's weaknesses. It makes us feel superior when we see others fall on their face in weakness.

Jesus encourages us, when we see others fall into calamity not to judge them or rejoice in their failures, but to look at ourselves and remind ourselves that "there but for the grace of God am I." In what areas of my life do I need to turn away from sin and turn toward God?

That is what we mean by opportunities. God is so gracious to us. He allows us to observe the calamities that come upon others, and gives us an opportunity to turn away from our sins and turn to Him.

Isaiah 55:6 says "Seek the Lord while He may be found." God forms us by giving us "wake up calls." I need God in my life. I need to turn away from my pride, my greed, my lust, my anger, my sloth, my gluttony. I need to stop using people. I need to get my priorities in order. I need to put God and my neighbor ahead of myself.

God Forms us by providing us with hope for the future if we will turn to Him. And He warns us of judgment if we do NOT turn to



How God Forms or Re-forms Us

Jeff Fletcher

(Continued from page 18)
Him.

In Luke 13:6-9, Jesus tells a story about a landowner who had a tree that had been unfruitful for three years. For three years all it had been doing was simply taking up space. It was soaking up the sun and the rain and the nutrients from the soil just as all the other trees had, but it provided no fruit. It was like a black hole in the orchard, a cipher. It sucked up resources, but never gave anything back.

The owner was finally disgusted with the tree. "Chop it down. Get rid of it. It's just taking up space. It's nothing better than dead wood." But along comes the gardener and pleads the case of the tree. Sir, let's give it one more chance. One more try. Let me put a little more fertilizer around it and let's hope that this time it will be fruitful. Then, if it still does nothing, we can cut it down.

You know, we often get frustrated with others, with their lack of progress. In the business world there's a principle called the Pareto principle. It says that about 20% of the people in an organization do about 80% of the work. And that about 80% of the people do only about 20% of the work. It's often true out in the world.

Unfortunately, it's often true in God's Church as well. A small number of dedicated, hard working people give their time, resources and energy to make stuff happen. They teach, serve on ministry teams, help in worship, share their faith, give their money, etc. Meanwhile, the majority of people

do very little, give very little, and often demand more.

Sometimes, we can get a little frustrated and say, "Let's purge the inactives from our church roles. Let's stop wasting time and energy on folks who don't really care. Let's concentrate on the ones who are really committed. Let's cut down the unfruitful trees."

And Jesus says, wait. Let's give them another opportunity. Maybe if they listen to a few more sermons, participate in a few more Bible studies, maybe if you ask them to help just one more time, maybe then they'll really turn to God, open themselves up to be used by God.

Jesus is hopeful about our future. Jesus is patient. Jesus believes that maybe, just maybe, we really can be formed by God and used by God. Jesus doesn't give up easily. But his patience won't last forever. Eventually, time will run out.

At some point in the future, the end will come for each of us. At some time, our opportunity to turn to God, to be committed to God, to be used by God in a meaningful way will come to an end. There will be a day when we are judged.

If we return to God to be used by God, He will show us His mercy. If we reject God and refuse to let Him into our lives, He will judge us. There will be a time and place of judgment and destruction by fire.

God formed us in our mother's womb. Sin has caused us to be DE-formed. We need to be RE-

formed into His image. We do this by refusing to CON-form to the spirit of this world but instead by being TRANS-formed, by the renewing of our minds.

Will you allow God to Re-form you by taking seriously the lessons found in His Word, the Holy Bible? You don't have to learn from your own mistakes. You can learn from the mistakes of others.

Will you allow God to Re-form you by paying close attention to the examples of the negative effects of sin, not to blame or judge others, but to challenge you to turn to Him? Take advantage of God's willingness to change you.

Will you allow God to Re-form you by looking to the future with eyes of faith and hope to see the Kingdom of God which is available to all who trust Him? Will you take seriously the threat of judgment for those who fail to turn to God?

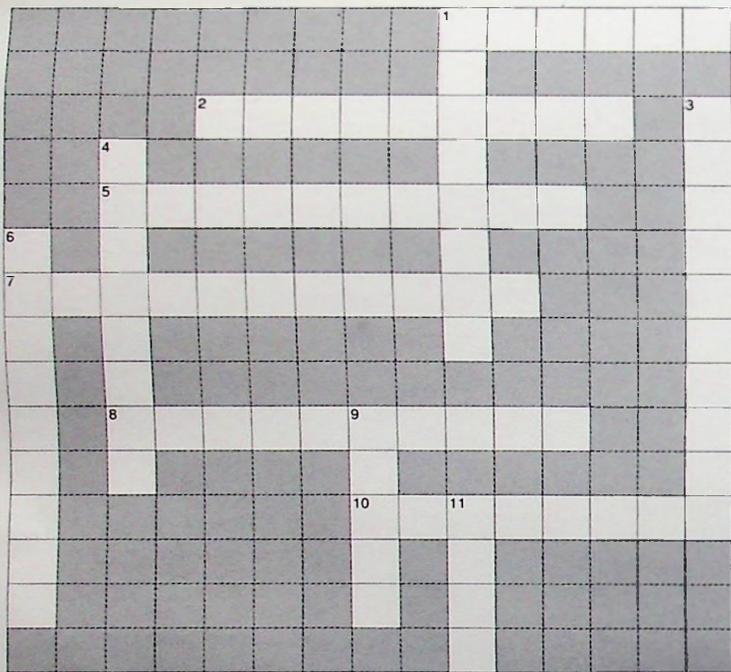
Seek the LORD now while He may be found. Turn to Him TODAY. Not tomorrow. Not next month. Not next year. Today is the day for you to turn away from your sins and turn to God and allow Him to Re-form you. God will take what you give Him, your life, and He will make you a fruitful disciple.

Are you willing to let God Re-form you?



Crossword

The Restitution Herald



Across

- "Where did John receive the vision to write the book of Revelation?"
- "I saw the holy city, new _____, coming down out of heaven" (Rev 21:2).
- "repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of _____ may come" (Acts 3:19).
- "...but be ye _____ by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2).
- "As to his sons and the many oracles against him and the _____ of the house of God" (2 Chr. 24:12) NASB.
- On what road was Saul (Paul) converted?

Down

- "What Jewish sect was Paul (Saul) a member of?"
- "Thus says the Lord GOD, "On the day that I cleanse you from all your _____," (Ezek. 36:33) NASB.
- "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new _____" (2 Cor. 5:17).
- "Create in me a clean heart, O God, _____ And renew a _____ spirit within me" (Ps. 51:10) NASB.
- "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy _____" (Mt. 11:28) KJV.
- One of the Church of God's longest serving ministers currently pastoring a church in Idaho. Pastor Emory _____.

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Developing Christian Character

In this Issue:

Responding to Conflict
What's Wrong With Gossip
Developing Patience
Poetry: I Am Just a Man
Crossword



From the Editor...

On Being God's Friend



Carole King wrote the song, "You've Got a Friend" which says: "Winter, Spring, Summer or Fall, all you've got to do is call, and I'll be there, yes, I will, you've got a friend." Proverbs 17:7 says: "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity" (NIV). It's important to have good friends who can offer mutual support and companionship as we journey through life.

David, the King of Israel, certainly understood the value of a close friend. It was his deep and abiding friendship with Saul's son Jonathan that helped protect his life. Before David became King, while he was under attack from Saul, it was Jonathan who remained a loyal friend, having sworn an oath of friendship to David. Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the LORD, saying, 'The LORD is witness between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants forever.'" (1 Samuel 20:42).

Yet, David knew both sides of human friendship, the loyalty and trust to be sure, but also the bitter pain of rejection by a trusted friend. He wrote about this in the Psalms: "Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me" (Psalm 41:9). He complained, "They repay me evil for good, and hatred for my friendship" (Psalm 109:5).

Human friendship is an important part of living a happy, quality life. But we have no guarantees. Wouldn't it be great to have a relationship that was bedrock? Wouldn't it be a blessing to have someone that we know will

always be there for us? Someone who we know we can call on "Winter, Spring, Summer or Fall?"

The good of the Gospel is we can! God is not only the Creator and King of the universe, He can also be our friend. The Bible provides us with examples of people of who have experienced intimacy, closeness and friendship with God.

Abraham was called God's friend (James 2:23). What a wonderful legacy to have. Generations of men and women remember you as having been a friend of God. Abraham's friendship with God was born out of an abiding trust that Abraham placed in God. He left his native land, faithfully going to a land that God had promised to give him and his descendants (which he did not have at the time the offer was made). Abraham entered into a covenant with God, a binding act of friendship.

Moses was another friend of God. According to Exodus 33:11, he used to speak to God face to face as a man would speak to his friend. While God was contemplating wiping out the entire nation of Israel because of their sinful rebellion, Moses interceded on behalf of the people, and God listened to Moses. What would it be like to be able to visit with God face to face? What would it be like to have God listen to our prayers and act on the basis of those prayers? What would it be like to be a friend of God?

God's only begotten son, our Messiah and Savior Jesus has made it possible for us to become friends with God. "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I

command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name" (John 15:13-16). Jesus invites us to become his friends, and in becoming friends with the son, we are brought into the family and we become friends with the Father of Jesus, God Himself.

Jesus laid down his life for us, taking away from us the penalty for our sins and granting us admission into the Kingdom of God. God will never take His friendship away from us. We can continue this friendship as long as we respond in faith and obedience, just as Abraham did. God will never betray our friendship. He'll never remove His love and friendship from us. As long as we are willing to enter into a relationship with Him through faith in Christ and baptism into His name and maintain that relationship by continuing to trust and walk in obedience to God, we have the assurance that we will be known, through all eternity, as God's friends. What greater hope and blessing could there ever be? Let us walk each day in the knowledge of God's friendship. May you find the many articles in this edition of *THE RESTITUTION HERALD* an encouragement to your growth in the knowledge of God and His Word as you journey through life as His friend.

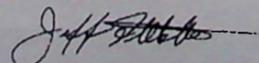

Jeffrey Fletcher, Editor



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EDITOR
JEFF FLETCHER

PUBLISHING SPECIALIST
JUSTIN TAYLOR

PROOFREADER
SARAH BUZZARD

MAILING AND SUBSCRIPTIONS
MARCY PREWITT

ADDRESS EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE TO:
THE RESTITUTION HERALD, ATTN: JEFF FLETCHER, 130
WAYNE ST., PONCHATOLA, LA 70454. E-mail:
happywoodscg@i-55.com

**ADDRESS MAILING AND SUBSCRIPTION
CORRESPONDENCE TO:**
THE RESTITUTION HERALD, ATTN: MARCY PREWITT,
P. O. BOX 100,000, MORROW, GA 30260 (E-MAIL ADDRESS:
info@abc-coggc.org).

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THE RESTITUTION HERALD ADVOCATES:

- THE ONENESS OF GOD (1 COR. 8:6);
- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S POWER (ACTS 1:8);
- JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT. 16:16),
AND IS OUR MEDIATOR (1 TIM. 2:5);
- THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16);
- THE MORTALITY OF MAN (JOB 4:17, PSA. 146:4);
- THE NEAR RETURN OF CHRIST (ACTS 1:11), AND LIFE ONLY
THROUGH HIM (COL. 3:3);
- THE LITERAL RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (JOHN 5:28);
- THE IMMORTALIZATION OF THOSE IN CHRIST (1 COR. 15:53, 54);
- THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (REV. 21:8);
- THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF
GOD UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32);
- THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND
ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1-
3);
- THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN
BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE
WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21);
- IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION
IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS
(ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO
SALVATION.



Responding To Conflict

Jeffrey Fletcher



Matthew 5:9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God."

"You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family" (The Message).

Conflict is a reality. It exists. There's no escaping it! At home, at school, at the workplace, in leisure activities, even at Church. Wherever there are two or more people together, there exists the potential for some degree of conflict.

Conflict has been defined as: "A difference in opinion or purpose that frustrates someone's goals or desires." To illustrate; I'm a parent. I want my child to do their chores. That's my goal or desire, to have those chores done. So I tell my child, who is happily playing, "I want you to stop what you are doing and do your chores". So far, so good. I have expressed my desire. But let's say that Junior has a different desire. Junior isn't nearly as concerned about getting his chores done as he is about what he is currently doing: playing, listening to music, talking to a friend on the phone or whatever.

He's enjoying what he's doing and his goal or desire is to continue doing what he's doing. Now, there is a problem. We have a difference of opinion. In my opinion, Junior needs to be doing his chores. In his opinion, I need to leave him alone so he can continue doing what he's enjoying. We are frustrating each other's goals. We have the basis of a conflict.

Conflict equals differences plus tension. I've asked Junior to do his chores, and he's ignoring me. So I tell him again, this time with a hint of agitation in my voice. Now, there is tension. I'm feeling frustrated, possibly even angry. Meanwhile, Junior senses the tension in my voice, and gets defensive, and so on. Our difference in priority, plus tension could escalate the moment into a major fight or not. This will depend on how each of us choose to respond to each other.

Reflecting on the root of conflict, let us consider James 4:1-2. "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight."

Selfish desires and the *inability* to see them as such (which is a form of deception), is at the root of most conflict. We need to pray for the Lord to open our eyes to see the truth about ourselves and about our desires.

There are a wide range of ways that people respond to conflict, and often we have a certain pattern that we use that perhaps we learned as

children, from our parents or others. There are three main types of responses: *Escape Responses*, *Attack Responses* and *Conciliation Responses*.

Escape responses conjure the image of the turtle which can pull his head inside his shell. When we respond in an escape mode, we tend toward denial. We pretend that the conflict doesn't exist—"what problem?" Sometimes, in an effort to escape, people engage in mind altering substances/activities such as alcohol, drugs, overeating or excessive busyness to avoid having to deal with the conflict.

Another way people escape is through flight, running away from conflict, quitting a job, running away from home, getting a divorce, changing churches. The most extreme escape response is suicide.

An extreme response to conflict is going on the **attack**. This may involve the sometimes costly and emotional action of bringing litigation against another person. Or it may manifest by striking out verbally by gossip and slander or physically with violence or even murder.

In between the *escape* and *attack* responses is a third, healthier and more God-honoring response, **conciliation**, that is, *working it out*. Within this "peace-making" role there is a range of possibilities. We can choose to handle a conflict by overlooking minor offenses, quietly forgiving and moving on. We can attempt to discuss our differences with the



Responding To Conflict

Jeffrey Fletcher

other person with the goal to reach a better understanding and perhaps a compromise. This may lead to negotiations where the conflict can be worked out between the individuals. If these methods don't work to resolve a conflict, mediation has become a popular alternative. With mediation another more objective third party(ies) are invited in to help. And finally there is the option of arbitration, where a third party will actually render a decision which both parties have beforehand agreed will be binding.

So, what should we do when we are involved with a conflict? In his book, The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict, Ken Sande distills the Biblical teaching into four primary principles:

- **Glorify God**
- **Get the log out of your eye**
- **Go and show your brother his fault**
- **Go and be reconciled.**

1. Glorify God. We should ask ourselves: *How can I please and honor the Lord in this situation?*

Relevant Scriptures: "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" 1 Corinthians 10:31. "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things" Col. 3:2. "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Romans 12:18).

Living at peace means gaining peace with God, our fellow man and being at peace with ourselves. The enemy of peace is selfishness, such as adopting an attitude of, "I don't get mad, I get even!"

If we would glorify God, we need to turn our focus to God, trusting in the Lord and doing His good work. "The Lord's unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him" (Psalm 32:10). God is in Control. "All things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose."

Consider a number of powerful Scriptural examples of how God was at work in the midst of conflict situations: Joseph in Prison. Daniel in the Lion's den. Jesus on the Cross. They trusted God and placed their lives into His hands and God was with them, working on achieving His glorious purposes.

2. Get the Log out of your eye. In this we should ask ourselves: *How have I contributed to this conflict and what do I need to do?*

Relevant Scriptures: "First take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye" Matthew 7:5. "A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense" Proverbs 19:11.

Before rushing off to battle a conflict, we should count the cost. Is it worth the time and energy that may be required to fight? "Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord" Lamentations 3:40.

We should examine ourselves in search of any sinful words, attitudes or actions that may have contributed to this conflict. Sinful "words" might simply be grumbling and complaining or may

include telling a falsehood, gossiping or slandering, backbiting or any unwholesome talk. These are all ways that our words can contribute to conflict. Do we have wrong motives? Are we motivated by pride, fear of man, or anger? We need to look in our own hearts to see what we might be doing that would be harmful or contribute to conflict.

When we're ready to repent of sin, there are Seven A's of Confession:

1. Address everyone involved.
2. Avoid the words "if", "but", "maybe" (any words that might try to shift the blame from you).
3. Admit specifically what you did.
4. Apologize. Express sorrow or regret for hurting the other person.
5. Accept the consequences. Do what you can to repair the effects of your sin.
6. Alter your behavior. Make changes in what you do.
7. Ask for forgiveness and allow time. Pray, studying God's word and practice what you are learning.

Once you have identified God's concerns and taken responsibility for your own contributions to a conflict you may need to talk to others about their shortcomings that have contributed to the conflict.

3. Go and Show your brother his fault. But first ask yourself: *How can I help others to understand how they have contributed to this conflict?*

Relevant Scripture: "If your brother sins against you, go and



Responding To Conflict

Jeffrey Fletcher

show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over" Matthew 18:15.

If we have a conflict with another person, and we have taken the time to consider what will best glorify God and then identify and repent of any ways that we have contributed to the conflict and we still believe that there is sin involved that cannot be overlooked, then we should go directly to the person with whom we have a conflict.

Direct communication is most Biblical.

This should be done tentatively. We may not know all the facts. We should guard against assuming we do. We must be prepared to listen to them. Don't accuse or condemn them. Remember to **T.H.I.N.K.** before we speak. Is what I'm about to say **True, Honest, Inspiring, Necessary and Kind?**

We must then offer solutions. It's not enough to identify problems, we must be prepared to offer some possible ways to solve these problems always recognizing our limits. Change cannot be forced. We can only suggest ways to correct problems. If we have attempted to resolve the conflict privately following the guidelines of the Bible, we may need to bring others along as witnesses, mediators or arbitrators. If those continuing attempts at reconciliation fail, the next step (within the Christian community) is to involve the Church. The final recourse, when all else fails, in resolving conflict within the church is to remove the offending

member's privileges of membership in the Church so that God's name may not be dishonored. And so the individual may understand the seriousness of their refusal to repent, that they might be brought to repentance.

4. Go and be reconciled. Let us ask: *How can I demonstrate forgiveness and encourage a reasonable solution to this conflict?*

Relevant Scriptures: "First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:24b). "Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Colossians 3:13).

Forgiveness is not a feeling. It does not necessarily involve forgetting, nor is it excusing. Forgiveness is a decision to cancel the debt of someone's sin against you.

There are four promises of forgiveness summed up in the following statements: "I will not think about this incident." "I will not bring up this incident again and use it against you." "I will not talk to others about this incident." "I will not allow this incident to stand between us or hinder our personal relationship."

What happens if we have done everything we can, and the person continues to mistreat or oppose us? We must control our tongue, seek counsel and support from spiritually mature advisors and keep doing what is right remembering the words of Scripture, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him" and "Love your enemy".

Our chief goal in life should be to honor God and to live lives as His children that give Him glory. As we do this, there will be times when we encounter conflicts with others. Conflicts provide us with opportunities to discover who we are and what we are made of. If we are truly God's children, we will approach conflict with a desire to make peace with others.

If we can remember to ask the right questions with the right attitude and then follow through with right actions, then we will honor God regardless of what others may choose to say or do. And we will be God's Children.

Remember to ask these four questions: How can I please and honor the Lord in this situation? How have I contributed to this conflict and what do I need to do? How can I help others to understand how they have contributed to this conflict? How can I demonstrate forgiveness and encourage a reasonable solution to this conflict?

Author's Note: *A number of the principles in this article are articulated in the book, The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict, by Ken Sande, 1997, Baker Books. For those who wish to study this issue more fully, I recommend that you read his important book. Also, Blessed are the Peacemakers by Neil T. Anderson and Charles Mylander, 2002, Regal Books.*



Make It Clear

Robert Bernheisel

***NIV, ASV, NASB,
The Message . . .***

***What should our
position be on
using "modern"
translations of
the Bible,
especially with
young people?***

***The author
addresses this
important issue.***

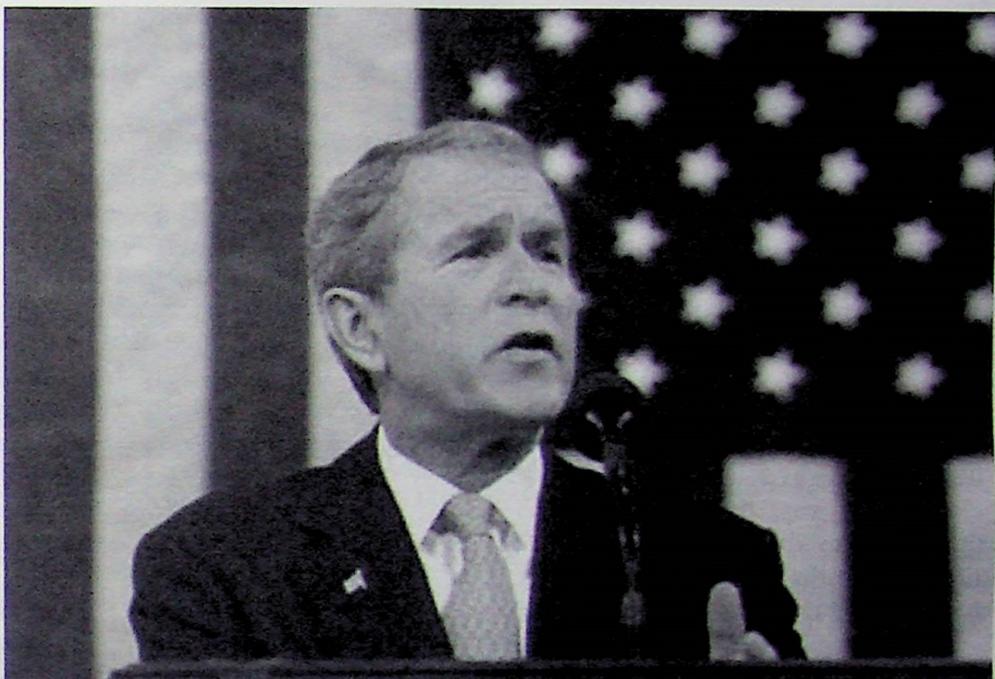


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About the Author: Robert Bernheisel is a 1980 graduate of Oregon Bible College and has recently applied to be licensed as a Church of God Pastor. He resides in Knoxville, Tennessee with his wife and two children.

You will not hear about it on the evening news, CNN, or even the Fox News network; but I have learned from my inside source that the president is concerned about people understanding the Bible. Since the many translations and numerous denominations have made it difficult for everyone to have the same understanding, he has decided to appoint a team of approximately four dozen scholars to make a new translation that will become the official translation in the English language. Some people will probably dislike the idea, but it is in everyone's best interest.

The above information is totally true except for the fact that it is not the president, but actually the king. And it is not something that is going to happen, but actually happened about 400 years ago. What did you think as you read the

information? Disbelief? Maybe a little concerned that it might be true?

I was blessed earlier this summer by attending a Church Youth Camp as a counselor. I think camps are a wonderful opportunity to get the focus off the world and give people a better view of what the Kingdom of God will be like. This was a great camp. But one thing caused me concern. I was listening in on a junior high class and they were reading the Bible. I could tell some of them did not understand what they were reading. A major reason why they did not understand was because some were reading a translation that was about 400 years old in a language that they were not fluent in reading or speaking. (It may have the same name but it is not the same language.)



Make It Clear

Robert Bernheisel

I remember when I was a teenager I went to church every Sunday but I did not like to read the Bible. I figured if I read it I might learn more rules that would take the fun out of being a teenager. It was at a Church camp where the Kingdom of God became real to me and suddenly the Bible was a different book! It came alive! It was real, totally! I read the book of Matthew at one sitting and continued to read ravenously!

If I can help it, I want that negative experience never to happen again to another teenager. I want them to see that the Christian life is the abundant life. I want the Bible to be as real to them as it is to me.

About 500 years ago another man wanted to make the Bible that clear. But his task was much more difficult. The Bible that was used was in a language that the common man knew little to nothing about. It was not the original language, and it was illegal to make an English translation!

This man, William Tyndale, began his work in England. However, when the authorities found out what he was doing, he had to flee for his life. They wanted his death not only for his translating work but because he did not believe or teach the same as the established church.

He wanted his translation to be so clear that the average boy working in the field could pick up a Bible to read and understand it clearly. His translation was referred to as the Ploughboy Edition. Since the vast majority of the families in that day were farmers this meant that the translator wanted the average 12-14 year old to be able to

read and understand the Bible. Just the age of the youth I spoke of earlier.

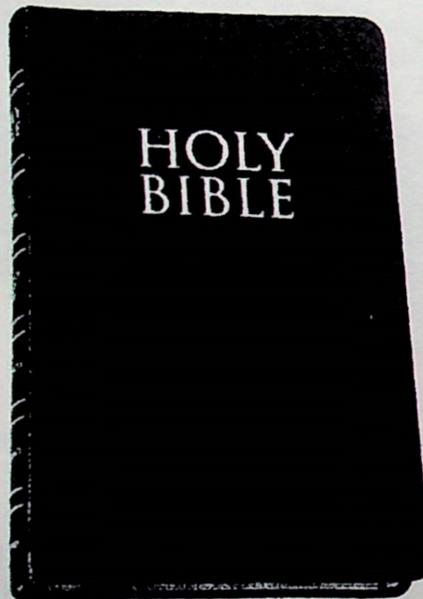
The translation that was done about 100 years after his translation, which was really just a revision of his work, became the established translation. This was not because of the quality of the work, but due to the endorsement of the king. I am glad though, that the intention of the king's translators was the same as William Tyndale's. They even invited

scholars who came after them to improve on their work. Their intention was to "bring the gospel to man in man's language."

That has always been the intention of most translators of the Bible. The efforts of William Tyndale (who did the 500 year old translation) and the scholars appointed by the king named James were not the first. During the fourth century A.D. the Bible was translated from the original Hebrew and Greek into Latin; the language of the people. In fact it was referred to as the "common"

Bible because it was intended for the use of the common man. Even the original Greek of the New Testament was written in koine Greek, the every day language.

I can count dozens of translations that have been done over the years and basically I think the intention was the same. Some translators were not as qualified as others, and all to some degree, have been influenced by their own theological perspective. For this reason we need to exercise some caution in choosing a Bible. The author and the original are not perfect and no translation is perfect. By the way, neither are any of the readers.





Make It Clear

Robert Bernheisel

If we study the history of translations we can see a pattern that applies not only to translations but to other concepts of change within the church such as worship styles, the order of worship, building construction, etc. When change is first suggested there is resistance. If the change gets a chance and proves itself beneficial, it then moves on to acceptance. Once it is acceptable and practiced, it moves on to respectability.

I wish it would stop right there. But it doesn't. After it is respected long enough to become tradition; it is then held sacred. Then we have to start all over again if someone wants to try something different. Traditions of men that become sacred are historically a hindrance to truth.

I know you would not want to throw out the baby with the bath water, so we also do not want imperfection in a translation to stop us from benefits that make the gospel message clearer. If we sacrifice clarity for technicality then we are saying that salvation is more for the intellectual than the common man. There is something wrong if we feel we must always debate someone into the kingdom. If we cling to something because we are so

used to it that it has become sacred, then what has it become?

In Numbers 21 we have the story of the snakes that were sent among the people because of their rebellion and how Moses, at the Lord's command, made a bronze snake on a pole so that those who had been bitten could look at it and live. Do you know what happened to the snake that Moses made? They kept it for about 700 years! It became an idol (2 Kings 18:4). A good thing from God became an idol because the people would rather cling to a thing or an idea rather than the one true God. There was nothing wrong in the brass serpent itself. It is what the people made of it that became sin.

Yes, even a Bible can become an idol. I have seen a bumper sticker that says something to the effect of "If it ain't my translation it ain't Bible!" They might as well say "I have no idea what I am saying but I am thoroughly convinced. Don't confuse me with the facts."

Now, I am not against anyone using a Bible that they have used for years and grown accustomed to using. A famous evangelist admits that since he is accustomed to the 400 year old translation he uses

it. But he recommends a contemporary translation for all new believers. I even use old translations in my studies. But the youth do not need anything to hinder them in the knowledge of God.

To choose one translation, and stick to it as if it were inspired of God, is to defeat the purpose of the translators. They wanted clear communication. If they lived in our day and spoke the language of the day they would want a Bible translation in their present language. According to the principles of their work they would not use their own translation!

What is it we are doing when we preach, teach, or write about the Word? Are we not attempting to make it clearer? Why not help the student by making it as clear as possible to begin with? It is the mission of the Church. We are to help the blind see clearly. Our mission is not to place stumbling blocks but stepping stones. Let's make it clear. ✠



What's Wrong With Gossip

Dr. Dale A. Robbins



Dale A. Robbins is the founder and president of VCM (Victorious Christian Ministries), and has served in pastoral and evangelistic ministries for twenty-five years. He has written numerous Christian publications and articles, and is the author of the nationally distributed book, What People Ask About The Church.

(Excerpted from the original) The following is a hard-hitting article speaking against the perception that gossip and slander are minor character flaws in God's eyes.



**All Scripture is quoted from the New International Version*

Romans 1:28 "Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.

1:29 They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and malice. They are gossips, **1:30** Slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant, and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents;

1:31 they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

1:32 Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these things but also approve of those who practice them."

In the Scripture above, the Apostle Paul paints a grim picture of reprobates—those who have rejected the Lord and have embraced a lifestyle of sin. He makes it clear that God condemns such evil behavior. "They persist in doing these things, knowing that those who do such things deserve death" (Rom. 1:32).

As Paul described this evil conduct, we might expect to find mention of such vile things as greed, deceit, adultery, murder and so forth. But please take note of the other inclusions—especially the mention of "gossip and slander." Does this come as a surprise? Paul said that gossips and bad-mouthers were in the

same league as murderers, sexual perverts, and God haters—and that such sins were worthy of a death sentence!

"Gossip" is derived from the idea of "whispering." According to the same dictionary, "gossip" means "To indulge in idle talk or rumors about others; spreading of sensational stories." Funk and Wagnalls dictionary defines it as "Idle, or malicious talk about others." As we can see, gossip is a close cousin to slander, and God's Word places both in the same cupboard as murder and other wickedness—sins worthy of death.

Let me ask, as a Christian do you occasionally slip up and commit a murder here or there? Or how about theft—do you occasionally burglarize a home or steal things from the store? You may think this is silly to ask. Of course, a Christian lifestyle doesn't behave that way. But how about gossip or slander? Do you engage in idle talk or rumors about others? Do you participate in bad-mouthing or spreading rumors about others? According to the Bible, which sin is less severe? Murder or gossip? I'm sure you get the message. Paul said, BOTH are sins equally worthy of death.

The Apostle Peter, also used murder as a comparison with another, sometimes under-rated sin. "But let



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none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters" (1 Peter 4:15). Notice that a "busybody" is placed in the same company as "murderers, thieves, and evildoers." The dictionary defines a busybody as "a meddler; a person who seeks confidential information about others; a snoop; a nosy person."

A busybody is another close relative to gossip—a person who meddles in the affairs of others. They are like a peeping-tom who snoops and spies. A busybody is the investigator for the gossips and rumormongers, seeking to uncover sensational details and to whisper the latest news. Sometimes busybodies are persons who have too much time on their hands, with nothing better to do than to talk too much. "Besides, they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying things they ought not to" (1 Tim. 5:13).

Not Just a Little Bad Habit

By now I'm sure that you realize that anything which is placed in the same category as murder must be a serious sin—something that should not be taken lightly. But unfortunately, Christians do not usually consider gossip and its related activity as sin.

In over two decades of ministry, I've encountered scores of Christians who don't seem to

think gossip is wrong—who are obsessed as busybodies, gossips, and bad-mouthers, and have caused irreparable damage to the body of Christ. I could fill books with the stories of anguish and grief inflicted to hapless victims. "The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts" (Prov. 26:22). Mean, vicious accusations and rumors have ripped out the heart and soul of many fellow Christians and leaders, draining them of their love, enthusiasm, and their desire to live for God. It has split churches, created strife, and promoted division and turmoil. "Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down" (Prov. 26:22).

Sadly, some have said that "the Church" is the only army that kills its wounded. Regrettably, this has sometimes been true. Brothers who have needed our love, forgiveness and encouragement have been mutilated by gossip and evil talk. Is it no wonder that gossip is equal to murder? It is nothing less than verbal rape and assassination.

What we must realize is, gossip is more than a little bad habit. Gossip is wicked and sinful—a seething disease of corruption from the mouth. "With his mouth the godless destroys his neighbor" (Prov. 11:9). Gossip is an enemy to God and everything called holy—a cancer which spreads a deadly infection to the

body of Christ. Not only did Paul place a gossip in the same league with murderers and sexual deviates, but Jesus warned that for those who would offend his little ones, it would be better for them to be bound with a millstone and drowned in the sea (Mark 9:42). Surely, a harsh and horrible punishment awaits those unrepentant gossips who harm followers of Jesus.

How to Recognize Gossip

Gossip is one of the most dangerous sins because it is so subtle and ambiguous—many are unable to recognize it. Be on alert against gossip whenever you hear of "secret information" being circulated, or if you hear anyone else's name is used in a conversation. Gossip exists whenever persons "talk about others" in less than a favorable way. The root of gossip is negativeness, judgementalism, slander, etc. Avoid associating with people who gossip. "A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid a man who talks too much" (Prov. 20:19). You probably remember the old saying: "If you can't say something good about others, don't say anything at all." Wise advice if you wish to avoid sin.

Gossip often masquerades as "concern" for others. Rumors or gossip will seem more palatable if they first hide behind a pretentious expression of concern. "I hate to say anything about this to you, but I'm 'concerned' about so and so." At



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other times the gossip will seek you out as their “confidante” to unload their “heavy heart” about their concerns. “I’m very troubled about so and so and I don’t know who else to talk to about it.” In reality, the gossip is not sincerely concerned about solving the problem, only in talking about it—stirring it up. “A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends” (Prov. 16:28). A gossip thrives on the negative, the controversial, and the sensational. Any person who is genuinely concerned about solving a problem, will go and privately confront the person at the source and express their concern.

The gossip is like a spider looking for a prey to lure into their trap of gossiping. They may confide to you secrets or their private concerns about other people. Perhaps in consolation, you may express your half-hearted agreement with their concerns, or you may even be enticed to confide your secret concerns to them. Consequently, the gossip will eventually repeat the process with someone else—but next time, they will add your name as an endorsement of their private “issue,” and will eventually even disclose the secrets you shared to them. And on and on it goes.

There are times when people need to confide their own problems with a friend in the Lord. But avoid revealing

anything to a person who gossips—they can’t be trusted. “A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret” (Prov. 11:13).

Things to Remember about Gossip

- Gossip is as sinful as murder and will suffer the same consequences unless there is repentance (Rom. 1:32).
- God holds you accountable to your words (Matt. 12:36-37).
- The person who gossips to you about others, also gossips to others about you.
- Gossip & slander disqualifies persons for spiritual leadership (1 Tim. 3:11; Jas. 3:2).
- Gossip often masks as pretentious concerns for others.
- Gossip often thrives upon secrecy. Where secrecy is removed, gossip is hampered.
- Gossip always contributes to a problem and never to a solution.
- Gossip always distorts and exaggerates, and is never a reliable source of truth.
- Those who gossip & slander are not in right fellowship with God (Rom. 1:28-32).
- Those who gossip rarely get answers to prayer, and often face persistent, unexplainable problems (Psalms 66:18; Prov. 21:23; Prov. 6:12-15).

What to do about Gossip

- If you have been a gossip, confess this as sin and ask Christ to forgive you. “Repent” by turning in a new direction

and surrendering your tongue to Christ, not to gossip or bad-mouth again (1 John 1:9; 1 Cor. 7:10).

- Keep your nose out of other people’s business.
- If you can’t say something good or encouraging about others, then keep your mouth shut (Eph. 4:29).
- Never criticize another person, except to their own face with an intent to help. Criticism can never be “constructive” if expressed to anyone else.
- If your “friends” start bad-mouthing others to you, stop them in their tracks—refuse to be a partaker of their sins (1 Tim. 5:22).
- Avoid association with persons who gossip (Prov. 20:19).
- Expose works of darkness by reporting gossip to the pastor that he may confront and offer correction. Gossip should be treated as any other vile sin (Eph. 5:11).

“I will watch my ways and keep my tongue from sin; I will put a muzzle on my mouth as long as the wicked are in my presence” (Psalm 39:1). ☩

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The Trial of Your Faith Worketh Patience

M. A. Woodward

This article was originally printed in the November 3, 1931 issue of the Restitution Herald and then reprinted in the January 29, 1952 issue. We are reprinting it yet again for its timeless good sense. The author reminds us to hang on to the armor of God no matter what challenge we face. Faith conquereth all.

What is more difficult for us poor mortals to bear than a hard trial of our faith in God or our fellow man? We cannot always see or understand the lesson our Father sends to perfect our faith in Him. We stumble along wondering why the dark, unpleasant things need to come into our lives, until suddenly the cloud breaks; the sun in all its splendor reveals the glory of God; and we see how faith should have worked patience for us. We will not lose the lesson it has brought us.

Not one of us need wonder why the trial comes, whatsoever it may be or whenever it comes. It may be just the thoughtless tongue of gossip that has sent its poisoned dart into our lives, some cruel words perhaps were never said. If we could know thus the truth, there was not one jarring, unkind word in all that was said, but some thoughtless, absent-minded person heard something, guessed at the rest, guessed some more, and finally had quite a plausible story heaped together in a careless brain. At the first opportunity that presented itself, someone tried to unload it on the first person who would wait long enough to hear it.

What a kindness to this person, if the other one would say, "Now

friend, if you have any good thing for me to hear, I will listen, if not, let us read a little from James 3. This portion of God's Word is very fine for us today." That would be enough to quiet the gossipy tongue.

O, there are so many things, little rasping things, to keep us wondering what next will come! As Moses of old caught the needed vision of silence, we need often "to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." We need so much faith and patience, more perhaps than we have ever needed, for great things are being done these days, things we never before dreamed of, and we need the overruling power to guide us more and more.

We cannot look into a printed sheet, but some new, startling thing confronts us. What is more baffling to the financiers, bankers, businessmen today than the money question? Truly, "the love of money is the root of all evil," and has wrought all this amazing upheaval in every walk of life today. We stand still and wonder what will the next startling news be. While we wait in wondering thought, we catch again the words of Moses, "The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." We know God has spoken to us again, and we say, "With your patience possess ye your souls."

So, beloveds, when the trials hit you hard, just wait. God is working every problem out, perhaps not all as we expect or had hoped for. He who could quiet the waves into perfect calm can so easily quiet the nations of the world, and what a calm there will be! "My Father knows; He knows it all," and can

still men's anger, quiet their malice and hatred, and in spite of the hope of many that the world will forget God and rest on man's wisdom and power, they will find that man's extremity was God's opportunity. Another power from some hidden source will step in, take hold and manage the world's affairs much better than mankind ever has. How they will wonder when they come to know that the God they ridiculed is the Supreme Ruler!

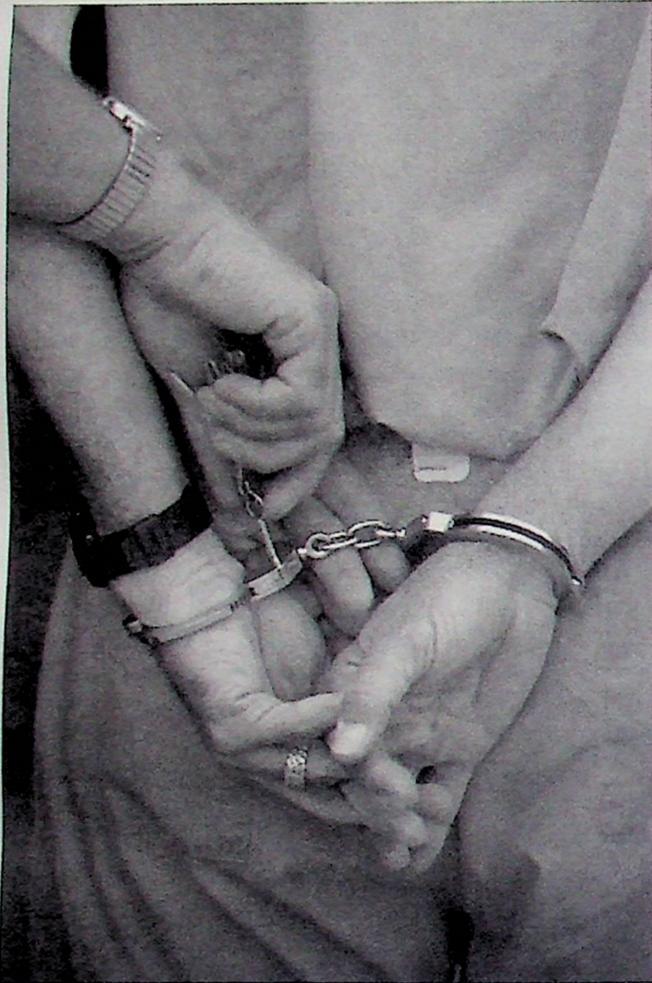
Stanley Krebs says, "A truly intelligent man trusts God. He is conscious of the Father though he does not fully comprehend Him. How true that worship develops God-consciousness! We cannot be fully conscious of God's power if we are continually fearing that some evil is to befall us."

While the trial of our faith worketh patience, it also develops trust, hope, fearless love which in these days we need in our lives, because fear, developed in our thought, drives love, trust, and faith out. Once we make fear our own, hold it in our thought, magnify it, and I believe it will set in motion forces that will bring upon us the very thing we have feared. So with the love of God, trust, and faith, hold these thoughts before you in earnest prayer. They really actualize the good we desire, and we thrill with the thoughts of God's constant love for us. We arise from prayer full of faith, full of strength to carry the burdens of life, for God is on our side and the trial of faith has worked patience for the day. Thank God, my Father knows; He knows it all. ☩

In a Honduras Prison

A Story of Sadness and Joy

By Dr. Bill Lawrence



Dr. Lawrence and his wife Mardy are long-time Church of God members and have done much work in Missions throughout the world. This story about a young man from Honduras, while fiction, is based on the true events of several individuals.

I was about nine years old when I finally ran away. I'd tried several times before but I just got too hungry and had to go back. I wanted to run away because some of the men who came to our house at night to be with my mother would hit me and curse me and even kick me and tell me to get out. There was no place to go for we only had one room. That last night was really bad and I was bleeding where he had hit me in the mouth. Bet if I had had a daddy he would not have had the nerve to hit like that. My mother said that my daddy never stayed around after he

found out she was going to have a baby—me.

Out on the street it was cold and wet for it was the rainy days and nights in Honduras. I've since learned that my country is the poorest country in Central America and that six out of ten people do not have jobs. Anyway, that night I was trying to sleep in a corner by an old building when this kid came along and asked me if I wanted something to eat. Of course I did. I'd not eaten a thing in two days. He said he belonged to a gang that would give me something to eat if I would come with them. They did give me some beans and rice and a corner to sleep in. The next morning an older kid asked if I wanted to join their gang and if so they would help me get food when I was hungry. Of course I said yes—I really didn't know what a gang was but I was hungry and I'd never go back where my mother's nighttime friends would hit and kick me. This guy said I had to be marked and showed me some of the gang's tattoos. I thought that if that was all I had to do in order to get food that I would get tattooed. The next day we went downtown and he said that in order to be a gang member I had to help get the food. He showed me a food stall and told me to grab some tortillas and run back to where we were living. I did that and found that it was easy, for the man who owned the stall just chased me a few feet and then gave up in the crowd.

After a few times like that the leader said that I needed some more tattoos. I got them and they looked pretty neat. For the next several years that's about how life was. Then one night the leader said that to become a permanent member of the "family" I'd have to kill someone. I didn't like that but I did want to be a family member. Somebody explained to me what a family was—where you have a group that sticks by you. I'd never known that and it was nice to have the gang members accept me—when I stole successfully. It was a while before they told me who I was to kill—a member of another gang that our gang fought against once in a while. It took me several weeks of watching that guy and then I caught him alone and sneaked upon on him and stabbed him in the back while he was alone. I guess he died for he



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fell down and didn't move and then I ran off. After that I got a lot more tattoos showing what a great guy I was—at age fourteen.

Life went on like that for several more years—they never caught me for killing that guy. Then one time we robbed a store, but me and some other members of our gang family got caught and I ended up in prison. I've not gone to court and no one has proved that I am guilty but they have kept me here three years in a special section of the prison for gang members. We have extra guards for we are "dangerous criminals."

The old guys here say there is not much to live for if we ever get out. No one will give us a job because we have tattoos and they know we are gang members and no one wants to hire a gang member. The police don't want us to get out because they know we will steal again or murder again for there is no other way to live in Honduras.

Today a bunch of Americans came to the prison to help the sick people. I had a bad cold and also wanted some vitamins for I don't feel real strong. Just eating beans and rice doesn't help me to feel strong. Before I could see a doctor I had to go into a room where there were about ten people sitting and talking to other prisoners. This lady said she was from a church close by and that she wanted to talk to me about Jesus and that this man Jesus

loved me and died for me. I'd never thought that anyone cared for me at all except maybe the gang members who would stick by me whenever I would steal or ever kill someone the leaders thought should be killed. I asked her why this guy Jesus loved me and she said that He loved everyone—no matter who they were or what they had done. Also something about Him paying the penalty for the bad things that I had done. He could not get me out of this prison but He could get me out of the sad life that I was facing. I could tell that she really believed this and she said that all the others in the room who were talking to us prisoners believed this and loved us too. That is why she and the others had come to the prison these last few days and that the doctors and dentists and nurses who had come from America came for they loved us and wanted to help us. They did not get paid for what they were doing and even paid to come down to Honduras.

I told her I would like to have this Jesus for a friend and that I was happy to have anyone pay for the wrongs I had done in my life and that I would try to live a better life. She told this to the doctor I was seeing for my runny nose and he patted my shoulder and told me how glad he was that I was going to trust Jesus with my life. He said that he had done that some years ago and that everything in his life had been better since. He said not all the

problems went away *but that* Jesus helped him deal with the problems as they came up in his life. He gave me some medicine and some vitamins and I thanked him. He then held my hand and the hand of his interpreter and talked to this Jesus about me and my future. I felt much better when I went back into our area.

The next Monday that same lady and some of her friends and her husband came back to the prison and we had a Bible study. They talked more about Jesus and I guess that I am beginning to feel that I can trust Jesus. I don't know how to read but one of the guys here does and they gave him a Bible and he reads to several of us every afternoon. Some day they will let me out of this prison for I have not caused any problems since I've been here and it is getting more crowded all the time. This lady said that when I get out that the people in her church family would like me to join their church family and not go back to my gang family and that they would do their best to get me a job but at least they would help me get food. She seems so honest and since she comes every Monday night with her husband and others, I guess she really means it. There are many of us in this prison that are friends of Jesus and we have meetings and talk about Him and sing a lot of songs about Him. I am happier than I have been in my life even though I am still in prison. †



Two Busy "B's"

Louise Lapp

About the Author: Louise Lapp is a member of the Troy View Church of God, is the wife of the late pastor Clarence E. Lapp. Louise has served in many congregations throughout the Church of God. She was an instructor at Oregon Bible College and is an accomplished musician contributing several songs to, and was an editor of, the Church of God hymnal. Louise gives us timeless truths about translating beliefs into action.

We used to sing an old love song, "Love and marriage go together like a horse and carriage. You can't have one without the other." Good advice!

Bees are known for being industrious. From this originated the expression, "busy as a bee". Some honeybees are called drones because they do no work.

I found my two "B's" in Paul's letters. In the first part he explains WHAT to "B"elieve and in the second part, because of what we believe, HOW we ought to "B"ehave. These two "B's" are like the oars on a boat. If you paddle only on one side, you go in circles and get nowhere. Both have to work together.

"B"ELIEVE WHAT?

Be a busy "B" and find out what you believe. Find it in the Bible and read it. Paul says, "Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

Paul calls Christ the "second Adam," which means he lived after the first Adam. What is important to know about the "first Adam"? Did God make man with an immortal soul? Genesis 3:22 says, God sent him from the garden "... lest he put forth his hand and take of the tree of life and eat and live forever." So God did not make him with an immortal soul. He didn't want him to live in this sinful condition forever.

Paul tells us WHEN we receive immortality in the great resurrection chapter in I Corinthians 15. Everything depends upon the resurrection. "If Christ be not

raised, your faith is in vain, you are yet in your sins. Then, they also which are fallen asleep in Christ Jesus are perished" (I Corinthians 15:17-18).

I Thessalonians 4:16, 17 confirms this truth. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." There is no place in the Bible that says we are judged at death. "Christ who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearance and his kingdom" (2 Timothy 4:1) . . . Is there any place in the Bible where the wicked are promised immortality? No!

Believe that God, the Father, (Jehovah, I am) is a loving Father and gives you guidance for your life in His Holy Word. He gives strength for your struggles; "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble (Psalm 46:1).

God's 10 commandments are lifted to a higher level in the New Testament. But thank God, we have forgiveness!

Some people are confused because Jesus is called "god" and God is called Savior. Remember that "god", "savior", "lord" are all titles applied to Jehovah, Jesus and man.

God is a just God and He hates sin but loves the repentant sinner. His great love for us moved Him to sacrifice His son for our sins. There is no greater love than this.

Believe in Jesus! Accept Him as your Savior and begin a new life

with Him (Acts 2:38 and Romans 6:4). These are the first and most important steps to know and do.

HOW TO "B"EHAVE

1. Be something
2. Know something
3. Do something

1. BE SOMETHING.

To be a Christian, we must be something. "No one teaches higher than he lives." God has not promised life without temptations and trials. They make us grow.

I am 93 years old and lived in the horse and buggy days and we had no electricity. I grew up on a farm and learned some good lessons about hard work, discipline and responsibility. I milked cows by hand before I went to school and when I got home. Our lawn mower and washing machine were operated by "girl" power. Water was pumped and carried; also wood for the stove was carried.

A scary incident happened when I was 13 or 14 years old. I was told to harrow a field. To do this, I needed to guide four huge workhorses. When my Dad left me, he instructed, "Don't miss any ground where you turn the corners!" Talk about responsibility and earnest prayer! "God, don't let anything happen to spook these horses until I get done." There was a woods next to the field. Was some wild animal lurking there?

One day I learned a good lesson in discipline. It was a warm day in spring and I wanted to go swimming in the creek near our house. My Dad said, "No, it's too cold yet." I had been taught not to talk back, so I stepped behind the door and stuck



Two Busy "B's"

Louise Lapp

out my tongue. He looked between the crack of the door and the wall . . . so I got some discipline on my bottom that I still remember! I learned to hold my tongue in more ways than one.

God disciplined Moses by not letting him enter the Promised Land. Moses lost his temper. God disciplined David and wouldn't let him build the temple. Paul was blinded for three days so the Lord could change the direction of his life. Does the Lord discipline (chasten) us? Hebrews 12:6-9 begins: "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth".

Don't make decisions by what "feels" good but do what is RIGHT, and good feelings of victory will follow without regrets or ruined lives. Psalm 119:11 tells you what will keep you from sin. "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." Proverbs 3:5, 6 will also keep you out of trouble. "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

2. KNOW SOMETHING. If you were going to fly an airplane, you wouldn't just hop in and take off then push every button to see what would happen. No! For your own safety and the safety of others, you would diligently study and even memorize much of the instruction book and then a teacher would train you and fly with you until you could fly alone.

Since the Bible is our instruction book, you need to read, study and memorize it. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished

unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). The Bible is the best and most complete guidebook for life that you can find.

If you ate only two or three meals a week, what would happen to you? If you are to keep spiritually strong, you need some spiritual food at least once a day. You are "transformed (changed) by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2). "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

When you read, do three things. 1. Pray for understanding. 2. Read slowly to absorb. 3. Live it; empowered by God's Holy Spirit. Some challenging guides for living are: Romans 12; I Corinthians 13; Matthew 5-9 and the book of James.

3. DO SOMETHING. Just as people need training on jobs, we need pastors and Christian friends to help us. Jesus sent seventy out "two by two" to every city. They uphold and encourage one another in the work (Luke 10:1). This is why we "forsake not the assembling of ourselves together" (Hebrew 10:25). We exchange experiences, counsel and love. We pray for each other and we can all give somebody a hug or a smile when they need it. Write cards, send flowers or food, and call someone on the phone.

You can share your faith by telling what God has done for you but the word of God is more powerful. "For the word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword . . ." (Hebrews 4:12 NIV). You may say, "I think" or "in my humble opinion," but people may think their opinion is better than yours! It's much better if you can find answers in the Bible or quote (gently) a Bible verse. Some things

are not specifically named, but the guiding principles are there. A real good one is "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Corinthians 10:31c).

Find the talents God has gifted you with and "do something" for His glory. The Dead Sea is dead because it has no outlet.

If fear prevents or affects your service, claim 2 Timothy 1:7, "God has not given us the spirit of fear but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." This power, the Holy Spirit was in Jesus "without limit" (John 3:34 NIV). "For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit." This spirit binds us together, as "one", to do God's will. That is why Jesus said, "I and my Father are one." In John 17:11, Jesus explains this ". . . that they (believers) may be one as we are one."

Instead of naming this article "Two Busy "B's," I could have entitled it "Faith and Works." It's the same idea.

James 2:26 says, "Faith without works is dead." Titus 3:15 says we are saved, "not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." We can't earn salvation by works, but faith without works is dead.

OPTIONAL

Sing these words to the chorus of "Jingle Bells:"

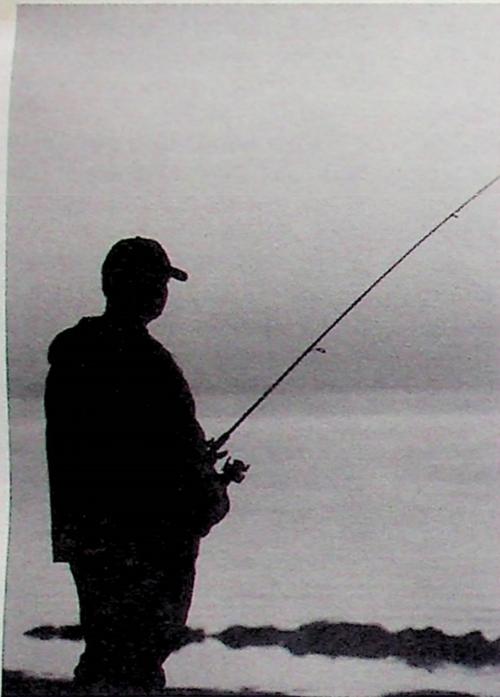
*"Faith and works, faith and works,
Must together stay.
Both are in my mind and heart,
For they save my soul today."*

REPEAT ♠

Scriptures are quoted from the Kings James Version.

"I am not God. I am Just a Man"

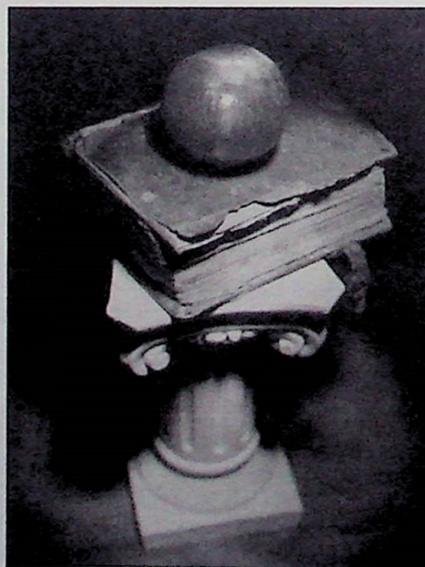
E. Richard Smith



The following poem was written by E. Richard Smith, a long-time Church of God pastor who fell asleep in the Lord on September 1, 2003 at age 81.

I am not God. I'm just a man.
All that I can do is the best that I can.
And the best that I do I really need not report,
That pleasing all people I'll certainly fall short.
I seek God's help for wisdom to know,
What is best for His people as along I go.
I know no man will agree with all that I do,
And I realize that I wouldn't want them to.
What seems right—right now—I'm sure you will find
With a little more facts I may change my mind.
And what words come out may not be the way I
intend,
For what you're thinking (and I'm saying) may differ,
my friend.
Now I realize many will say it's not true—
But I believe it has happened even to you!
I won't always be right—no man ever will be;
But I'll try to do my best, the best that's in me.

And, yes, I know that there's many a man
who is smarter and wiser and can do more than I can!
And no matter what knowledge I ever acquire,
Wanting to know more burns within like a fire.
Show me knowledge without wisdom and I'll show
you a fool.
Knowledge is creditable, but common sense must rule.
And I hope when you weigh what I have done—
That something or somehow I've helped out someone.
And maybe you'll look at the good things I try,
And forgive my faults—let the bad things pass by.
Remember we know not our own faults—they are
hidden by pride.
And many great works we could do, are kept locked
up inside.
Some are easily discouraged so they will not express
Their feelings and ideas, though they might be best.
Never let this be your lot, or fable—
For all you can do is the best that you're able . . .
Because I am not God—I'm just a man, and all I can
do is the best that I can.
And I hope I do this as long as I live.
If I fall short of my goals, please don't judge—just
forgive! ☩





The Little Wild Rabbit

Children's Story

Mary Railton



About the Author: *Mary Milne (formerly Mary Railton), is the wife of the late Kenneth Milne, a Church of God pastor and an instructor at Oregon Bible College. Mary currently attends the Guthrie Grove Church of God in South Carolina.*

Reprinted from The Restitution Herald, March 6, 1956, p.13

One day when Dick and Phil were playing "hide and seek" in a patch of tall swamp grass, they stumbled upon a mother rabbit and her little baby. In a flash the mother rabbit was gone, but in a few minutes the boys caught the little baby rabbit.

How frightened the little fellow was as they held him carefully in their hands! "What's the matter, little fellow?" Dick asked. "We won't hurt you. We are going to take you home and make a little house for you, and feed you, and take good care of you. You'll make a dandy pet.

Hurrying home, the boys brought the rabbit to proudly show their mother. Then they made a small cage and placed lettuce and carrots and a small dish of water inside. They put the baby rabbit in his new home. Anxiously they watched to see if he would eat some food. But he

scurried into a corner and huddled into a tiny ball.

"Perhaps you'd better leave him alone for a while." Mother advised. "Maybe tomorrow he'll eat a bit."

Two days went by and the little rabbit hardly stirred from his corner. He looked sick and miserable with fear. Though hungry, he would not touch the food the boys held out coaxingly to him.

Finally, Mother said, "Boys, I think that your rabbit is going to die unless you take him back to the swamp and to his mother. He has a wild nature and just cannot live in your cage. He isn't used to being restricted and can not become accustomed to it."

The boys hated to give up their new pet, and argued with their mother that they could give him a much better home than he would have in the woods which were filled with dangers. "Why," Phil said, "he would make an easy dinner for a hawk, or an owl! A weasel might get him—lots of things could happen to

him. But if he would only stay with us, he would be safe."

Mother answered, "That is right! But just the same you must take him back or he will die soon. He has a wild nature and cannot appreciate the good things you would like to do for him."

"Perhaps that little wild rabbit can teach us a lesson, boys. God has offered us a wonderful opportunity to live in a world perfected of sin and sorrow. However, He knows that we cannot enjoy or appreciate living in the Kingdom of God unless we become 'new creatures.' You know, God offers us much better things than we can find in this sinful world. He offers 'abundant living,' joy without measure, life without death, peace without fear.

"Even though He holds it out before us, we can refuse it, just like that rabbit refused your good food. That little rabbit has refused a good home, good food, and peace from his enemies because he does not understand or believe that you are his friends.

"Boys, we can refuse the good things that God has offered us if we will not try to understand or have faith in His Son. Yes, we can be like that little wild rabbit if we refuse to follow Jesus."

Phil and Dick took the wild rabbit back to the woods and watched him scamper away. Dick spoke through tears. "We would have loved him, if he would only have let us."

Thoughtful Phil said, "I wonder if Jesus ever feels that way about us. I'm not going to be like that rabbit. I going to read my Bible and go to Sunday school and church and learn all I can about how God wants me to live."

"Me, too!" replied Dick. And off they ran for home, eager to improve now that they had learned their lesson. ✠

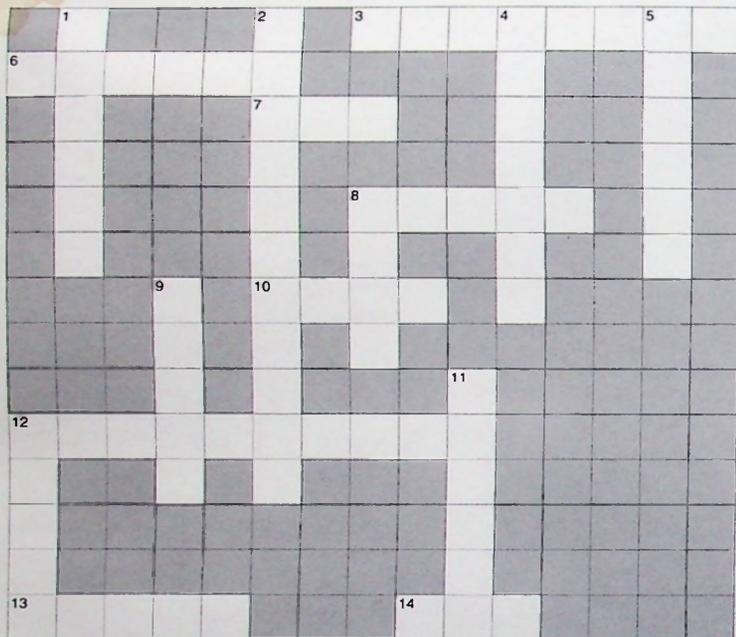
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Crossword

"Exodus"

The Restitution Herald



Across

3. A Hebrew Midwife's name?
6. The bread was made without ____ ?
7. Who did the midwives fear?
8. What did the water become on the ground?
10. What wind brought the locusts?
12. What did the glory of the Lord fill?
13. The Lord brought them out of what land?
14. This was in Moses' hand.

Down

1. What year was the tabernacle set up?
2. What is the year end feast called?
4. He ruled Egypt.
5. They attacked Israelites at Raphidim.
8. It burned but was not consumed.
9. The main character (person) in Exodus.
11. Moses' father-in-law.
12. Darkness covered all Egypt for ____ days.

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