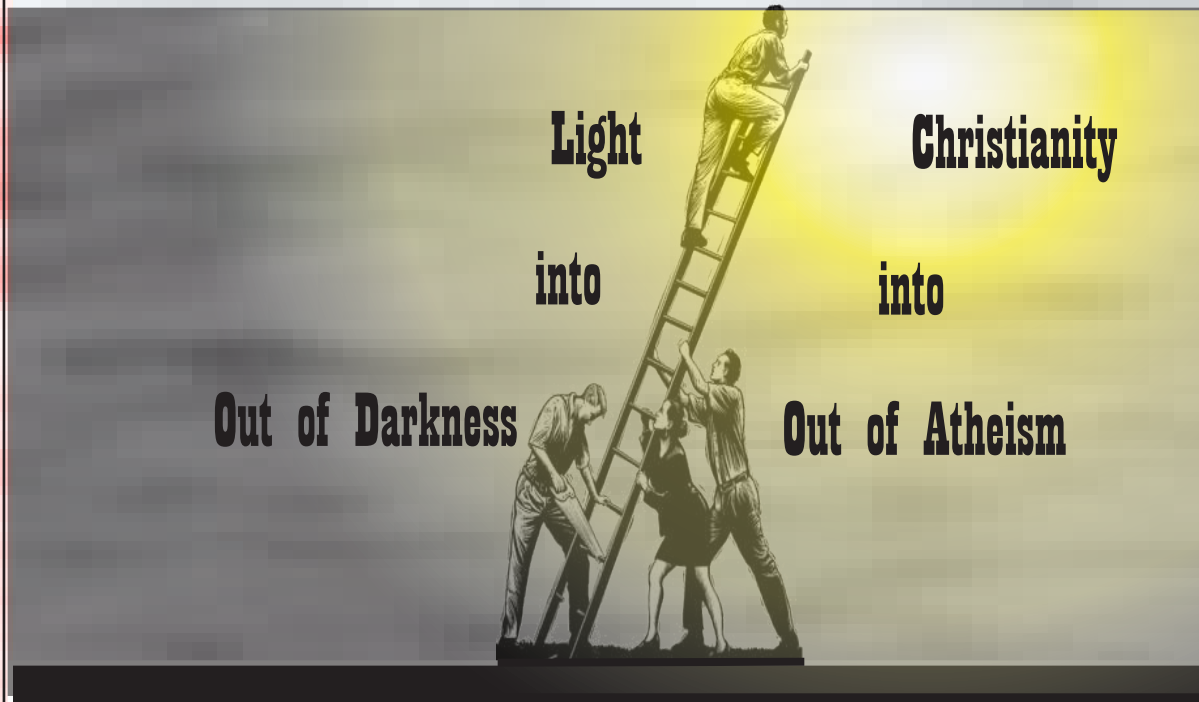


2015 LECTURESHIP

The 26th Annual Oklahoma City Lectureship April 23 – 26, 2015



Psalm 119:105

*Thy word is a lamp unto my
feet, and a light unto my path.*





DEDICATION



It is an honor to dedicate “the 26th Annual Oklahoma City Lectures” book to Willard and Yvonne Cox. They were married December 21, 1951. These two lovely spirits have worked together over sixty years as Willard has preached the gospel of Christ. They have been married for sixty-three years and to this marriage five children have been born: Ronald, Donald, Gerald, Sharon (Smith), and Curtis.

Willard and Yvonne were members of the Barnes church of Christ from 1994 to 1999. Willard helped with the preaching and taught in the “Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies.” During these years the members of the Barnes church learned to love and highly respect these two servants of Christ.

They have worked together in the kingdom of God’s dear Son as Willard preached for over sixty years. This has taken them to Alabama, Florida, Texas, Missouri, North Carolina, and Oklahoma. They now live in Big Cabin, OK.



PREFACE

It is the intent of the manuscripts in this year's book, in theory, for one who is in "darkness," for one who may be an "atheist" to start with the first lesson reading through the last lesson, learning to believe in the existence of God, that the Bible is truly the word of God, to learn of the contents and the order of the Bible, and to learn of the one central character of the Bible, whose mission was to save the spirit of mankind by shedding his blood on the cross and their obeying the gospel of Christ. Then, to learn how to serve God faithfully, while preparing one's self for eternal life. Therefore, our theme: "Out of darkness into Light – Out of Atheisms into Christianity."

It is the purpose of this year's lectureship book to counter, at least in a small manner, the onslaught, the fierce, destructive attack, against the Bible and Christianity; thus, all things holy that continues to increase in our nation. One of the first arguments made by atheists is, "There is no evidence to believe in God." Another argument is, "The Bible is full of errors." This year's lectureship book answers these arguments and others. However, it is well worth understanding the words of Social Psychologist Jonathan Haidt, who said when writing about how our brains process arguments. He wrote: "When self-interest, partisan identity, or strong emotions are involved, reasoning turns into a lawyer, using all its powers to reach the desired conclusion." So, theory is one thing, reality is altogether another!

It must be understood when using this book to teach another, that honesty is a first requirement. It also needs to be understood how people think, as we try to teach them. One person stated it well: "We tend to jump to conclusions first and then our reason manufactures supportive arguments. Arguments can still yield light, but remember that we are all biased — so don't expect your atheist friend to immediately change his or her mind. (Dialoging with Atheist, by Michael Lehmann). So, even though you have the information in your hand, an honest person before you, change does not come easy; the long held beliefs, the friends that will certainly be lost, and the unknown that lays before him/her will not let go without a battle and until all biases of a life time are used.

Yet, this is our mission; this must be our passion, to change one mind, to win one spirit, to Christ at a time. Paul wrote: "...the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:22-23). If the church is to truly be the "fullness" of Christ, then, she must have the same mission, she must have same passion, he had and he said of himself: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

It is our hope at the "Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies" that this lectureship book will aid you in the mission and passion of Christ.

-- Frank R. Williams,
lectureship director



Introduction to the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies

The Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies (OKCSBS) began its work in 1991. Presently there are men laboring in this work: Marion R. Fox, director; Frank R. Williams, dean of students; and Mike VonTungeln and Jerry Gore, instructors.

Classes have been conducted in various locations in Oklahoma. The work is centered in Oklahoma City with classes being conducted in congregations in the Oklahoma City area. The Barnes church, where the school is located, is an excellent location for this work. Classes have been conducted in Binger, Chandler, Hydro, Maysville, Piedmont, and Tuttle in the recent past. Other congregations have contacted us concerning our conducting classes in their building.

The Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies is designed to prepare men to be leaders in the Lord's church (elders, preachers, deacons, teachers, etc.) and women to serve in the church (teachers, etc.). The curriculum is Bible-centered and is designed to prepare the student to become an independent student of the word of God. It is the intention of the faculty at Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies that our students should not be taught "what to believe," but "how to learn from the Scriptures the will God."

The full-time curriculum consists of four years of classes, one night per week presently (subject to change to two nights). Students seeking advanced options may choose to attend extra courses in Greek and other subjects. Also, part-time or audit students may choose to just take one course per night at their convenience. By stretching the course-work out into a four-year format there is a greater maturation in the learning process than in a two-year program. In addition, students can take advantage of our night schedule by continuing in secular work without needing to raise support from the church. By offering a schedule that fits people's busy lives, we allow our students to immediately increase their usefulness in local congregations.

Mike VonTungeln, Frank R. Williams, Jerry Gore, and Marion R. Fox have experience as preachers, elders, and as faculty members in other preacher training schools.

We believe in the inerrancy and absolute authority of the Scriptures. We invite anyone to check out our school by contacting us and attending our classes. We are available to make presentations about our school to any congregation.

For more information, contact:
Marion R. Fox, director
1001 Twisted Trail
Oklahoma City, OK 73150
marionfox@okcsbs.com



A Word from the Dean of Students

The lectureship is just one part of what the “Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies” does each year. The school year itself is thirty-two weeks, divided into two sixteen week semesters. Generally, each semester covers one subject, but it is not uncommon, in the case of some subjects, which it is deemed necessary to take thirty-two weeks. The leadership of the school has been determined from the beginning, to cover subjects fully and not just skim over them. At times, a subject may even require forty-eight weeks to cover fully; therefore, this amount of time is given to the subject. Of course, the Greek classes are progressive in nature; starting with “Greek for Beginners,” then ending with translating 1 John from Greek into English. This means that Greek is a four year course.

Every book of the Bible is covered, plus other subjects, such as: The History of the Churches of Christ in America, I, II, and III; Issues Facing the Churches of Christ; Eschatology, The Biblical Flood, The Holy Spirit, and a few other subjects. One of the desires of the faculty is to teach the students how to study and to think for themselves! It is common for faculty to say: “If you cannot see it for yourself, don’t accept it!” This means that our faculty must work hard to bring each subject down to its simplest point, then, build on it. Our students come to class at different levels of understanding; some are serving as elders, deacons, preachers, and Bible class teachers; while others are members who desire to grow in their knowledge, having studied the Bible for years; while still others are beginners, being new converts to Christ. It is the responsibility of the faculty to help each of these to grow in understanding of the subject being taught. The faculty and the students come to class remembering the words of Peter: “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: (2 Pet. 3:18).

The “Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies” serves the Oklahoma City area, and those within driving distance. There is no tuition charge and most of the material is prepared by the faculty and is handed out free of charge. At times, books are purchased by the school and sold to the students at the lowest possible cost; while at times, the books are given free to the students.

We must also remember our Journal, “One Heart,” which is part of the work of the school. The Journal is to promote the school and teach the truth! The articles are mostly written by the faculty, but also by friends of the school. The Journal is free to all who request it. If you would like to receive the Journal, please give your address to one of the faculty and we will gladly add you to our mailing list.

The “Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies” is supported by the Barnes church of Christ, sister congregations, and friends of the school. If you would like to help with this work, please get with one of the elders for information and he will gladly speak with you.

Frank R. Williams,
dean of students

Our Faculty

Marion Fox, director

Marion is a graduate of the Elk City School of Preaching and has preached for over 40 years and now serves as one of the elders of the Barnes congregation. His college degrees include: an A.S. (1963) from Southwestern Oklahoma State University, a baccalaureate (1965) and doctorate (1991) from Oklahoma State University, and masters (1969) University of Illinois. He has completed upper division Greek courses at Oklahoma Christian College. He has been a college professor (engineering-science division) and a National Science Foundation fellow in engineering, physics, and semiconductor manufacturing. Marion has authored several books and has engaged in several debates on various subjects.



Marion has served as a teacher for the Elk City School of Preaching; Elk City, Oklahoma 1973-76; Westside School of Preaching; Duncan, Oklahoma 1976 (Fall); Oklahoma School of Bible/ Preaching; McLoud, Oklahoma 1977-1981; Great Plains School of Bible/Preaching; Elmore City, Oklahoma 1989-91; Rocky Mountain Audio and Video Bible Institute; Selmer, TN: 1999- 2005; and Online Academy of Biblical Studies; Dyersburg, TN: 2000-2005. Marion has served as Director of the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 1991-present.

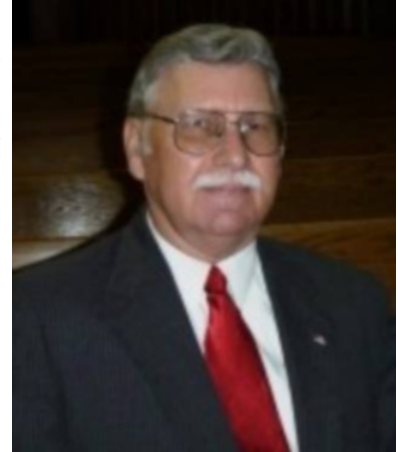
Marion has held gospel meetings and preached by appointment in fourteen other states. He preached and lectured at two state universities in Russia on scientific evidences for the existence of God and lectured on the existence of God and the work of the Holy Spirit in England. Marion has authored seven books.



Our Faculty

Frank R. Williams, dean of students and instructor

Frank works full-time with the school and the Barnes church of Christ and now serves as one of the elders of the Barnes congregation. He adds more than forty years of preaching experience to our staff. He attended the Northside School of Preaching in Harrison, AR, graduating in 1972 with a Masters in Sacred Literature. In 1977, Frank made an evangelistic trip to India where about 200 people obeyed the gospel. He served as local preacher for churches in Arkansas, Oklahoma, Wyoming, and Missouri and wrote weekly articles for four local newspapers. He has preached daily on three radio stations. He has preached in gospel meetings and lectureships in Arkansas, Oklahoma, Wyoming, Missouri, Georgia, Iowa and Tennessee and has preached at four congregation in California. He has had articles published in The One Heart Journal, Gospel Advocate, Firm Foundation, contending for the Faith, The Gospel Standard, The Gospel Journal, and edited The Spirit of Restoration for three years. He has written a weekly bulletin article for nine years. Also in this experience is three years in the U.S Army where he served in the Army Security Agency. Frank has taught at the following schools: Northside School of Preaching (Harrison, AR.) 1971-1972 and 1975-1976, Wetumka School of Biblical Knowledge (Wetumka, OK.) 1992-1995, and Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies (Oklahoma City, OK.) 1995 – Present.



Mike VonTungeln, instructor

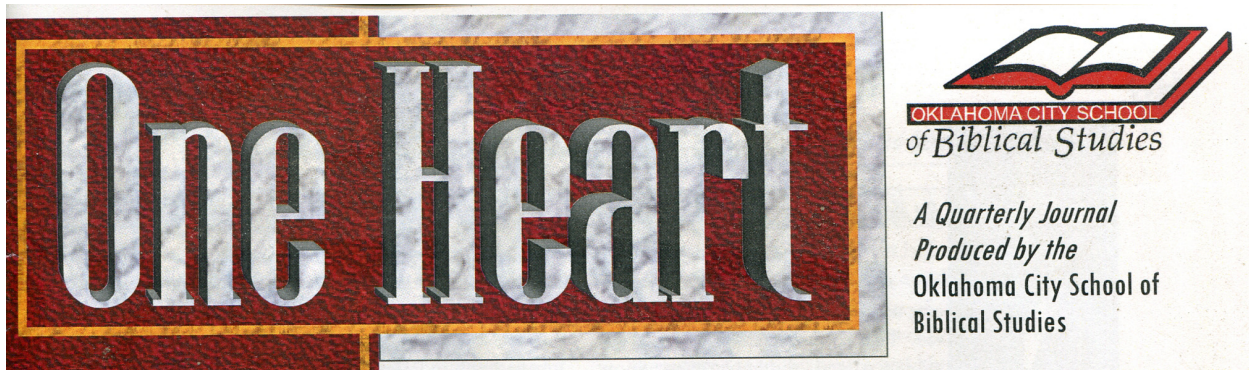
Mike brings to the school years of experience in working in the church and has served as an elder in the Ridgecrest church of Christ, Midwest City, OK for ten years. Mike attended Panhandle State University, Pepperdine University, Hawaii Pacific University and received the following degrees: BS in Chemistry, MA in Education, and an MS in Information Systems. Mike has also taken classes at the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies. Mike is not a full-time preacher, but he did share the pulpit in Kailua, HI from 1996-2000.



Jerry Gore, instructor

Jerry was born in Amarillo, TX., but has made his home in Midwest City, OK, for many years. He served in the U.S. Army from June 1967 – June 1970. He received a degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Oklahoma. He did most of his work at Tinker Air Force Base. Jerry and Judy have two children. Jerry has taught Bible classes at the Barnes church for many years. Last year, he taught the full year at the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies, and has been a very good addition to the school and with his “engineering” mind, he is very detailed in his teaching.





Dear Reader:

The One Heart Journal was originally conceived of as a much needed avenue to spread the news about the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies. In the first issue, an eight page, black & white journal went out and was well received. Less than one hundred addresses were sent copies of the first issue.

Almost eight years later, the Spring 2013 issue of One Heart was mailed out to about 465 addresses and bundles were sent to congregations by our students for local members. The original eight pages have been extended to twelve, and a beautiful color cover has been added. While this is still small compared to many brotherhood papers, we believe things are moving in the right direction.

The Spring 2012 issue saw a change in the physical size of the Journal. This change was made to reduce the work in preparing the paper for mailing. This will also allow an increase in the number of pages; thus, the number of articles in future issues. As the number of pages and articles are increased, we will not reduce the quality of the articles. Sound biblical writers will be asked to write articles! It is our deepest hope that we can finally get four issues of the Journal mailed out each year. Subjects will be assigned to writers months in advanced so each will have time to study and write, quality articles!

It has never been our desire to add just one more paper to hundreds already produced by the churches of Christ. It has been said: "the churches of Christ have more papers per member than any other religious group!" This Journal was intended for a specific purpose: to demonstrate the level of teaching and soundness of doctrine taught at the "Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies. Inside each issue you will read articles by our faculty representing the kind of material they present in class on a regular basis. However, we are now reaching out to seek other sound brethren to write. A number of these are speakers on our lectureship. As the "Annual Lectureship" is a work of the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies.

The Journal also allows us an opportunity to keep students, supporters, and area congregations informed about upcoming events and the class schedule for the school. We intend for the school to be a benefit to the church in the central Oklahoma area, and to do that we need more people to be aware of what we offer.

Just like the school, the One Heart Journal is made available at no cost to subscribers. Loving members of the Lord's church contribute to the work and make it possible to publish and mail the Journal every quarter so that no subscription fee is ever necessary.

If you would be interested in receiving One Heart individually or for your congregation, please let us know so that an appropriate arrangement can be made. More people receiving One Heart mean more people are learning about the school and potentially participating in its work and growth.

In His Cause,
Frank R. Williams,
Editor, One Heart Journal

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Does God Exist?

Benjamin J. Williams



BENJAMIN J. WILLIAMS was born in Morrilton, AR. on December 18, 1982. He is the son of Frank and Martha Williams. He graduated from Seminole High School in 2001. He graduated from the University of Oklahoma where he received a Bachelor Degree in Astrophysics, he also attended the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies and is presently attending Oklahoma Christian Graduate School of Theology where he is working on a Master's Degree.

Benjamin and Selene (McKnight) were married on June 28, 2003. They have one child, Lucas, who is five years old and they are expecting a second son in July, 2015. They live Jenks, OK.

He started preaching as a teenager and has worked with the Barnes church of Christ, both part time and fulltime as the local preacher starting in 2001. While serving at Barnes he also taught in the "Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies." He is now working with the Glenpool church of Christ in Glenpool, OK. They just moved into their new auditorium. Benjamin has preached on the "Annual Oklahoma City Lectures" and the "Gospel Journal" lectureships and Benjamin has done Apologetics presentations at Cleveland, Lindsay, Broken Arrow, and recently at the campus of OSUIT in Okmulgee."

He served as Editor of the Journal, "One Heart," for the first few years and did most of the work in getting it started. He has written an article in every issue to date. He has also written an article in the "Gospel Journal" and has an article which appeared in the "Restoration Quarterly."

Benjamin has served as director of "Faith Week" at Frog Road Christian Camp for a number of years and now serves on the Board of Trustees. Many young souls have been directed in the way of the Lord Jesus Christ through this effort.

Introduction

"All instruction given or received by way of argument proceeds from pre-existent knowledge."¹ The only way a person can come to believe in a proposition is either to assume it (know it as a basic fact requiring no additional argumentation or evidence) or to demonstrate it based on that which can be assumed. The challenge then in determining the existence of god² is that it requires a person to first determine what evidence is admissible. If god's existence cannot be assumed, what can be? In the traditional theistic arguments that follow, we will look at a wide range of possible starting points. What you must do, either as a person on this intellectual journey yourself or as one hoping to guide another person in the way, is to find a satisfactory starting place and begin. As there is no universal starting place for every mind, there is no universally acceptable argument for the existence of god. Each argument has strength (or weakness) depending on the relative strength of the assumptions in the mind of the individual.

Properly Basic Belief

W.K. Clifford once famously asserted, "It is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence."³ However, in everyday experience, we don't actually accumulate

1 Aristotle, Posterior Analytics, I.1

2 For this text, I will try to use "god" when I mean any type of god, and I will try to say "God" when I mean the specific God described by traditional Christian theology.

3 W.K. Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief" in Lectures and Essays, 1886, as found in Brian Davies, editor, Philosophy of Religion: A Guide and Anthology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 35. Clifford's position is often called Evidentialism. It should be noted that there is no sufficient evidence for Clifford's claim, and thus even if it is true, by Clifford's own logic, it would still be wrong to believe it.

“evidence” for ordinary things we know to be true (or, if you prefer, believe to be true). As an example, how do you know that the people you believe to be your parents are actually your biological parents? Most of us have never had a paternity test. We have come to trust the people that we have known from an early age, and we assume that they are telling the truth about being our parents. We know of course that it is possible in the world of so many possibilities that our parents are lying to us and that we are the target of a nefarious plot. However, most of us don’t lose any sleep over it, nor are we irrational to hold the belief that the people who allege to be our parents are in fact our biological parents, even in the absence of further evidence or inquiry. This is an example of the types of assumptions that we make on a regular basis, and that allow for human life as we know it. Try to imagine a world where even these assumptions are called into question at every turn!

Is that air you’re breathing?

This kind of knowledge or belief is called by philosophers a “basic belief,” and because in the case above the belief seems reasonable and rational, we can further call it a “properly basic belief.” A properly basic belief is a belief that one may hold as true and factual without much or any evidence or inquiry, and yet still be a rational person for doing so. A better example of a properly basic belief is believing in other minds. How do you know that anyone else has a consciousness in the same manner as you do or that they experience the world the same as you? By definition, you can only be conscious of your own consciousness, so you can never have unquestionable proof of the existence of other minds. How do I know that other people experience pain? How do I know that other people experience joy?

Likewise, how do you know that the universe is older than five minutes? You can consult your memory, but your memory is sometimes inaccurate, and for that matter, how do you know that your memory is trustworthy at all? Can you prove beyond a shadow of a doubt to a tenacious skeptic that you had toast this morning for breakfast? Could it have been a particularly realistic dream rather than reality? Could someone have left bread crumbs on your shirt and an open sack of bread on your counter just to confuse you?

As it turns out, we usually don’t get lost in arguments about these questions. We treat our memory of the past and our belief in other minds as a basic belief, requiring no proof. Furthermore, as they have proven to be a generally acceptable and reliable conclusion, we treat them as properly basic, and we believe that people holding such views are rational people.

God and Other Minds

What Alvin Plantinga accomplished in his book, *God and Other Minds*, was to show that belief in god falls into this same category.⁴ If there is a god of any type even remotely like the God of Christianity, then it is reasonable to conclude that belief in this god would be basic. Throughout human history, the vast majority of people have believed in some sort of god or gods as a way of making sense of the world. There is no reason to conclude that all of them were irrational people, except for your own prejudice against their conclusion. Quite to the contrary, religious people have been contributors and leaders in every field of intellectual inquiry, including philosophy and modern science up to the present date. So, why not conclude that belief in god is a properly basic belief? Why not conclude that it is perfectly rational to believe in god without requiring any additional evidence at all? Or put another way, why would we hold our knowledge of god to a higher standard than we hold any other belief we hold to be basic?

While I believe that Plantinga’s reasoning is sound, it leads to two interesting conclusions.⁵ First, while Plantinga has proven that you are rational to believe in God yourself, this is not necessarily grounds for convincing someone else. By admitting that your belief in God is an assumption, though reasonable, you

4 Alvin Plantinga, *God and Other Minds: A Study of the Rational Justification of Belief in God* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1967).

5 The consequences of Plantinga’s work will only be briefly considered here. A more thorough treatment is available in a paper I have written titled, “Credo In Cucurbita Magna,” which is currently available on my blog, www.benpreachin.com

have removed it from the normal realm of examination, much like the existence of other minds. It is difficult to compel someone to assume something that they are questioning to begin with.

Second, Plantinga has also made it possible to argue for the “properly basic” status of other possible beings, perhaps like Linus’ Great Pumpkin. Conceivably, a community of Great Pumpkin believers could claim that their belief in the Great Pumpkin is properly basic and therefore rationally assumed. In that case, a Christian (or any apumpkinist) would be forced to press his argument on other grounds. He could for example argue that the Great Pumpkin does not meet the criteria for a basic belief, as the Great Pumpkin, fine a gourd as he may be, does not sustain the universe in his orange glow or determine the fate of humanity.⁶ On the other hand, the Christian could argue that the life consequent to belief in the Christian God is superior to that consequent to belief in the Great Pumpkin. Of course, the Christian would then have to prove it by living an admirable Christian life. In this scenario, a church that did not live a more desirable life than that of the Pumpkinites would have no right to expect conversions, which may be precisely as it should be.

However, a person may not be satisfied with the assumption of god’s existence, and so it is helpful to look at some additional argumentation. Plantinga himself will often say that there are “two dozen or so” good, theistic arguments that point in the direction of god, depending on what you are willing to assume. However, if Aristotle is to be believed, a person who is determined to be skeptical of everything will ultimately know nothing, whether of god, other minds, or even his own mind.

The Cosmological Argument

One fairly straightforward theistic argument takes a look at the whole sum of reality as we know it and asks for a cause sufficient to explain it.

History is full of versions of this argument, including those of Anselm, Aquinas, Scotus, Leibniz, and many others.⁷ Presently, the most interesting and useful form of this argument is the Kalam Cosmological Argument, defended by William Lane Craig.⁸ The Kalam, traced back by Craig to medieval Islamic scholars such as Al-Kindi in the 9th century and al-Ghazali in the 11th century, is a succinct and powerful argument.⁹

1. Whatever has a beginning of existence must have a cause.
2. The universe began to exist.
3. The universe must have been caused to exist.

One fascinating feature of this argument is that it became more powerful in the 20th century than ever before. Aristotle, for example, believed that the universe was eternal, thus denying the force of the second premise. However, in the age where Big Bang Cosmology is the generally agreed upon and assumed model of modern science, science has returned to agreement with Genesis that the universe did indeed have a beginning. If this fact may be assumed, then the argument stands fairly well.

From the conclusion, the theist will usually suggest that this argumentation will equally apply to any material cause for the universe. So if the universe was caused by X, then it is fair to ask, what caused X? The result is either an unhelpful shrug of the shoulders or an infinite chain of causes with no beginning. One powerful alternative to this infinite regress of causes is to believe in a First Cause, or what Aristotle would call an “unmoved mover.”¹⁰ This would be a primary cause that has no cause for itself, a motion not

6 If it turns out that the Great Pumpkin does all these things (i.e. creates the universe, is omnipotent, is omniscient, is omnipresent, is eternal), then it may be argued that “Great Pumpkin” is merely another name for the Christian God, and the discussion may be ended with agreement. This approach may be taken, for example, with Allah.

7 See Davies, 179 and following.

8 William Lane Craig, *The Kalām Cosmological Argument* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2000).

9 The Islamic origin of this particular argument is important to notice, as this is a theistic argument, rather than a Christian argument. Davies notes that there are also important medieval Jewish renditions of the argument: Davies, 181.

10 See for example Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XII.

caused by some other motion.

Alternatives & Objections

Could it be that the first premise is false? Could it be that an object may begin without having any cause? From normal human experience, we can fairly say that this does not seem to be the case. Rabbits do not magically pop out of hats (or worse, from a hatless, empty nothingness); they come from other rabbits. If it is possible for the universe to begin without a cause, why would we not see a variety of things within the universe beginning without cause, popping into existence spontaneously and inexplicably?¹¹ We don't, and for this reason, most are willing to assume the truth of the first premise.

Could it be that the universe is eternal or has no beginning? As discussed above, this would fly in the face of one of the only points of agreement between modern, scientific atheists and the book of Genesis, namely that the universe began. Furthermore, it runs contrary to the principles of Thermodynamics, a field of physics often described as the most successful and certain of all physical knowledge. The Second Law of Thermodynamics states that the amount of useable energy in the universe is winding down.¹² Since the amount of useable energy in the universe is not zero, it can be deduced that the universe is not infinitely old and therefore had a beginning.

Could it be that there is an infinite regress of causes for the universe? In other words, A could have been caused by B which was caused by C which was caused by D and on and on. Leibniz and his rendition of the cosmological argument has already anticipated this possibility. He argues that even in this case, it is fair to ask what gave rise to the infinite regress of A, B, C, D, ... etc. The entire system deserves an explanation. "Therefore, even if you suppose the world eternal, as you will still be supposing nothing but a succession of states and will not in any of them find a sufficient reason, nor however many states you assume will you advance one step towards giving a reason, it is evident that the reason must be sought elsewhere. ... From this it is evident that even by supposing the world to be eternal we cannot escape the ultimate, extramundane reason of things, or God."¹³ Furthermore, it can credibly be argued that there is no such thing as actual infinities,¹⁴ as does Craig and a long list of philosophers and mathematicians before him: "While the actual infinite may be a fruitful and consistent concept in the mathematical realm, it cannot be translated from the mathematical world into the real world, for this would involve counter-intuitive absurdities."¹⁵ If this is the case, then the cause of the present state cannot be both infinite and material.

Could it be that our universe is one of an enormous number of universes being cranked out by a multiverse creating mechanism? This is a trendy new notion but doesn't help as much as it might seem at first. Basically, the argument has simply moved the problem back one step from, "what caused the universe," to, "what caused the multiverse?" Furthermore, there is no scientific or empirical evidence for such a thing as a multiverse or multiverse creating mechanism, and that should prove a problem for people who claim to only believe in what can be known by science. In short, the multiverse is an entirely metaphysical construction which doesn't even satisfy the need for which it was imagined!

11 Modern physicists have shown that from the quantum mechanical characteristics of space, you can indeed get particles and anti-particles to pop spontaneously into existence without violating known conservation laws. However, in the first place, space that has such quantum features is not "nothing" in the strict sense, but rather something. From whence arises this space with its characteristics and rules? Second, the particles and their equally present anti-particles tend to annihilate each other, leaving us to wonder why there seems to be more matter than anti-matter in the universe and why it continues to exist at all rather than returning to the previous state by annihilation.

12 Or better, the amount of entropy in any closed system increases.

13 Gottfried Leibniz, "On the Ultimate Origins of Things," 1697, as found in Davies, 194.

14 Instead of actual infinities, it may be better to say "real" or "material" infinities. All of these terms have specific meanings and therefore specific limitations and drawbacks. A more careful philosopher than myself would know which of these terms is best applied here.

15 Craig, 69. As a generic example, for a real set of objects, x , you can always add one more object to get $x + 1$. In the case of a real number, it is obvious that x does not equal $x + 1$. However, if x is an infinite, then $x + 1$ does indeed equal x , as the infinite is not actually larger by having added 1. This type of absurdity shows the divorce of the mathematically useful concept of infinities from reality, and therefore the impossibility of an infinite set of real causes.

It also leads to an important conclusion. It means that the mathematical success of physics is a random coincidence of this universe rather than a feature of reality. As some have called it, this conclusion might imply the “end of physics,” the realization that the mathematical description of reality is neither consistent nor meaningful. And neither are we. It is the farthest possible conclusion from that of theism. Instead of humans being a species carefully crafted by god, we are a passing bubble in a foamy sea of meaninglessness.

Doesn't god also face a cosmological argument problem? In other words, may we ask, “What caused god?” Isn't assuming an eternal god just as bad as assuming an infinite universe or an infinite regress of causes? Under scrutiny, this proves to be a nonsensical question. By definition, the god defended by classical theism is the First Cause, or an Uncaused Cause. To ask why He does not have a cause is like asking why a vacuum is always empty. A vacuum by its definition is empty, so if it is anything other than empty, it is no longer a vacuum by definition. Married bachelors and vacuums that aren't empty are logical impossibilities. Likewise, if you find a cause for a being, that being is not the God of classical theism. To quote Plantinga, “If God does exist, He cannot cease to exist; nor could He have begun to exist. Now it becomes clear that it is absurd to ask why God exists. To ask that question is to presuppose that God does exist; but it is a necessary truth that if He has no cause, then there is no answer to a question asking for His causal conditions. The question ‘Why does God exist?’ is, therefore, an absurdity.”¹⁶ Furthermore, god, as an immaterial being, would neither be bound by our concerns about material infinities nor subject to physical laws like those of Thermodynamics discussed above.

Could there be a first cause who is not god? Maybe, but what does our experience tell us? Each and every day we see examples of people making choices that serve as causes for various effects. In fact, free choices are the only obvious example of causes that are not themselves the immediate results of other physical states or causes. It seems reasonable to conclude that this sort of act is what constitutes the first cause. As Craig writes, “If the universe began to exist, and if the universe is caused, then the cause of the universe must be a personal being who freely chose to create the world.”¹⁷

The Teleological Argument

This argument takes its name from the Greek term, *τελος* (*telos*), which means an end or by implication a purpose. Whereas the cosmological argument looks for a first cause, the teleological argument is concerned with a final end. If reality (1) exhibits evidence of purpose and intent and (2) that purposeful feature is very unlikely to have arisen through random or unguided processes, then it is reasonable to conclude that this intent is the result of a purposeful choice to embed the intent in reality. In other words, if we see design, we should look for a designer.

So does this sort of design exist in the universe?

Intelligent Design & Irreducible Complexity

The most famous example of this argument is probably that of William Paley who compared our experience of reality as discovering a watch on a sandy beach.¹⁸ Paley asserted that we would never assume that the watch was the result of random motion or chaotic forces, so why would we believe such about the far more complex nature of human biology? “This is atheism: for every indication of contrivance, every manifestation of design, which existed in the watch exists in the works of nature; with the difference, on the side of nature, of being greater and more, and that in a degree which exceeds all computation.”¹⁹ Paley has been criticized by many skeptics for making an argument from a faulty analogy and for having an antiquated view of biology. However, the overall sense of Paley's observation has lived on.

16 Alvin Plantinga and James F. Sennett, *The Analytic Theist: An Alvin Plantinga Reader* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1998), 223.

17 Craig, 149.

18 See the first three chapters of Paley's *Natural Theology*, 1836.

19 Paley as found in Davies, 259.

A modern approach to this question is to look at the biological and chemical building blocks of life. Notably, Michael Behe has argued that not only do we see evidence of “function” in nature, we also see complexity in carrying out that function which cannot be explained through a step-by-step series of mutations. He calls these systems “irreducibly complex”: “An irreducibly complex system cannot be produced directly (that is, by continuously improving the initial function, which continues to work by the same mechanism) by slight, successive modifications of a precursor system, because any precursor to an irreducibly complex system that is missing a part is by definition nonfunctional.”²⁰ A common example of this would be the human eye. The eye works by the cooperative effort of the lens, the pupil, the muscles, the retina, and finally the interpretation of electrical signals from the eye by the brain. Without any one piece of this mechanism, it is hard to imagine a functional eye. Thus, for it to be an advantageous mutation (the kind that gets passed along onto successive generations), the eye would need to have developed in one step with essentially all its working parts already in place. The statistical challenge this presents is hard to express, as the likelihood of such a specific mutation may not be calculable.

Critics of Behe and his kin have a few meaningful attacks. First, some will assert that some things “look” designed because the universe selectively favors products that are successful. Out of the multitude of possible “eyes,” the only one likely to exist is the one that works and fills us with awe and wonder. Second, they also assert that just because science has not yet discovered an explanation for the development of these features does not mean that it never will. The last century has produced countless developments in our understanding of biology and chemistry, and it is safe to bet that the next century will as well.²¹

Thus, some theists have taken a more measured approach to Behe’s arguments. Plantinga, for example, simply states, “Behe’s argument ... is by no means airtight. Behe has not demonstrated that there are irreducibly complex systems such that it is impossible or even monumentally improbable that they have evolved in a Darwinian fashion – although he has certainly provided Darwinians with a highly significant challenge.”²²

The Fine-Tuning Argument

Another design-type argument is recent in comparison to most of the others in this list. Its power was recognized when the famous atheist, Antony Flew, cited the fine-tuning argument as one of the factors that converted him to a kind of theism later in life. The argument is also unique in that it is fueled by the acceptance of Big Bang Cosmology. The more committed you are to a 13.8 billion year-old, expanding universe, the more powerful this argument becomes.²³

The argument recognizes the reliance of modern models of physics upon several very precise constants.

- Speed of Light: $c=299,792,458$ m/s
- Gravitational Constant: $G=6.673 \times 10^{-11}$ m³/kg s²
- Planck’s Constant: $1.05457148 \times 10^{-34}$ m² kg / s²
- Planck Mass-Energy: 1.2209×10^{22} MeV
- Mass of Electron, Proton, Neutron: 0.511; 938.3; 939.6 MeV

20 Michael Behe, *Darwin’s Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 39.

21 Arguments of this type are called “god of the gaps” arguments, because they attempt to prove the existence of god by appealing to gaps in human knowledge. How does X happen? We don’t know, so X must be the result of god. The downside is that as science reduces those gaps, they also reduce the need and evidence for god. This type of argument is therefore tricky, dangerous, and most often should be avoided.

22 Alvin Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, & Naturalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 231.

23 Probably the best and most succinct discussion of this argument is provided by a video published by William Lane Craig titled “The Fine Tuning of the Universe.” It is available for free viewing online. Some of the information contained here comes from the transcript of that video.

- Mass of Up, Down, Strange Quark: 2.4; 4.8; 104 MeV (Approx.)
- Ratio of Electron to Proton Mass: $(1836.15)^{-1}$
- Gravitational Coupling Constant: 5.9×10^{-39}
- Cosmological Constant: $(2.3 \times 10^{-3} \text{ eV})$
- Hubble Constant: 71 km/s/Mpc (today)
- Higgs Vacuum Expectation Value: 246.2 GeV

The strange fact is that these numbers are not only constant, but if they were changed even a small amount, the universe would not exist. Let me state that carefully. We are not talking about the existence of life on Earth. We are talking about whether even matter itself can exist.

Gravity, as a relatively common and simple example, is regulated by G, the gravitational constant. According to Craig,

If this constant varied by just one in 10^{60} parts, none of us would exist. To understand how exceedingly narrow this life-permitting range is, imagine a dial divided into 10^{60} increments. To get a handle on how many tiny points on the dial this is, compare it to the number of cells in your body (10^{14}) or the number of seconds that have ticked by since time began (10^{20}). If the gravitational constant had been out of tune by just one of these infinitesimally small increments, the universe would either have expanded and thinned out so rapidly that no stars could form and life couldn't exist, or it would have collapsed back on itself with the same result: no stars, no planets, no life.²⁴

The more constants you consider, the stranger the situation becomes. The cosmological constant must be dialed into a precision of 1 part in 10^{120} parts. The mass and energy of the early universe must be distributed to a precision of 1 part in $10^{10^{123}}$. It is impossible to represent this kind of number meaningfully by analogy, because nothing in the physical universe adds up to anything near $10^{10^{123}}$.

Given this type of precision, chance seems to be out of the question. The most popular alternative today is a return to the multiverse discussed above under the cosmological argument. As this response goes, perhaps if an indeterminately large number of universes are churned out, at least one of them would be the precise universe that allows for the material universe that we observe. People in that universe I suppose would find it very strange that they exist, but ultimately they would be the inevitable result of mass-producing universes. As before, this response fails because (1) it is utterly unverifiable,²⁵ and (2) the multiverse producing mechanism would itself presumably require at least as much fine-tuning as the universe it produced. The more natural conclusion for many has been to see that a powerful and intelligent being selected the only possible values to create the universe of his desire.

The Regularity of the Universe & the Success of Mathematics

Another approach to the design argument is to consider the broad success of mathematics in the pursuit of physics. If we drop an apple from a tree, we can with accuracy predict not only that it will fall instead of rising, but also the rate of acceleration toward the earth and, if the height is known, the time it will take for the apple to reach the ground.

However, there is no reason why it should be so. We have seen it happen so often that we have forgotten that the regularity of nature – that the apple always falls – is itself an inexplicable fact. That the entire material world should behave in a predictable, repeatable, and discernable pattern is true, but not necessary. We can imagine a universe where nothing happens the same way twice. Why isn't reality more like that, whimsical and unpredictable? As G.K. Chesterton beautifully explains in a chapter titled, "The Ethics of Elfland,"

These men in spectacles spoke much of a man named Newton, who was hit by an apple, and who discovered

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ That the multiverse is unverifiable does not (and should not) bother me as a theist in the same degree that it should annoy atheists who reject god because he is unverifiable!

a law. But they could not be got to see the distinction between a true law, a law of reason, and the mere fact of apples falling. If the apple hit Newton's nose, Newton's nose hit the apple. That is a true necessity: because we cannot conceive the one occurring without the other. But we can quite well conceive the apple not falling on his nose; we can fancy it flying ardently through the air to hit some other nose, of which it had a more definite dislike. ... The man of science says, "Cut the stalk, and the apple will fall"; but he says it calmly, as if the one idea really led up to the other. The witch in the fairy tale says, "Blow the horn, and the ogre's castle will fall"; but she does not say it as if it were something in which the effect obviously arose out of the cause. Doubtless she has given the advice to many champions, and has seen many castles fall, but she does not lose either her wonder or her reason. She does not muddle her head until it imagines a necessary mental connection between a horn and a falling tower. But the scientific men do muddle their heads, until they imagine a necessary mental connection between an apple leaving the tree and an apple reaching the ground. They do really talk as if they had found not only a set of marvelous facts, but a truth connecting those facts. They do talk as if the connection of two strange things physically connected them philosophically. They feel that because one incomprehensible thing constantly follows another incomprehensible thing the two together somehow make up a comprehensible thing. Two black riddles make a white answer. ... It is not a "law," for we do not understand its general formula. It is not a necessity, for though we can count on it happening practically, we have no right to say that it must always happen. ... All the terms used in the science books, "law," "necessity," "order," "tendency," and so on, are really unintellectual, because they assume an inner synthesis, which we do not possess. The only words that ever satisfied me as describing Nature are the terms used in the fairy books, "charm," "spell," "enchantment." They express the arbitrariness of the fact and its mystery.²⁶

The keen observation that Chesterton is making is that we should truly marvel that science works at all. It is completely dependent on the regular and orderly behavior of nature, a fact for which we have no explanation at all. It is understood that gravity works the same whether in Chicago or Checotah, but there is no intelligible reason why it should be so, no matter how often it is demonstrated or described.

One could respond that this is simply the consequence of the mathematical laws of nature, but there again two words have been joined that deserve consideration. What does the field of mathematics have to do with nature? Mathematics is an abstraction of the mind. Nature is a physical reality. The abstract world of mathematics has shown such remarkable success in describing physical reality that we have forgotten to be surprised that it is so. The famous investigators of physical phenomenon were not so quick to overlook the curiosity. Physicist Werner Heisenberg described his feelings when he discovered quantum mechanics:

*I could no longer doubt the mathematical consistency and coherence of the kind of quantum mechanics to which my calculations pointed. At first, I was deeply alarmed. I had the feeling that, through the surface of atomic phenomena, I was looking at a strangely beautiful interior, and felt almost giddy at the thought that I now had to probe this wealth of mathematical structure nature had so generously spread out before me.*²⁷

Heisenberg also records a conversation with Einstein where they discussed their shared sense of wonder.

*If nature leads us to mathematical forms of great simplicity and beauty – by forms I am referring to coherent systems of hypotheses, axioms, etc. – to forms that no one has previously encountered, we cannot help thinking that they are "true," that they reveal a genuine feature of nature ... You must have felt this too: the almost frightening simplicity and wholeness of the relationships which nature suddenly spreads out before us and for which none of us was in the least prepared.*²⁸

Simply put, this sense of wonder at mathematical success and the beauty of natural regularity is well deserved. The power of mathematics to describe in detail a wonderfully ordered universe is inexplicable outside of classical theism. Only with the premise of an intelligent creator do you simultaneously arrive at the conclusion that the universe would be orderly and that the human mind would have the prowess to

26 G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (New York: Dodd, Mead, & Company, 1908), chapter IV.

27 As cited in S. Chandrasekhar, *Truth and Beauty: Aesthetics and Motivations in Science* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 65.

28 Ibid.

assess its inner most workings through the use of mathematical abstraction.

The Ontological Argument

The ontological argument is another traditional argument, but it is probably the least understood and least practical of all the classic theistic arguments. It requires a keen philosophical sense to grasp. I'll lean heavily here on others to explain this argument to cover up for my own inadequacy in handling it. I believe it is an argument that a person should ponder, but I don't expect it to sweep most people off their feet.

From Anselm, Descartes, and Kant

Anselm's approach (11th century) to this argument is beautiful, but an acquired taste. He writes his argument, not as an appeal to man, but as a prayer to God:

And so, Lord, do you, who gives understanding to faith, give me, so far as you know it to be profitable, to understand that you are as we believe; and that you are that which we believe. And indeed, we believe that you are a being than which nothing greater can be conceived. ... Even the fool is convinced that something exists in the understanding, at least, than which nothing greater can be conceived. For, when he hears of this, he understands it. And whatever is understood, exists in the understanding. And assuredly that, than which nothing greater can be conceived, cannot exist in the understanding alone. For, suppose it exists in the understanding alone: then it can be conceived to exist in reality; which is greater. Therefore, if that, than which nothing greater can be conceived, exists in the understanding alone, the very being, than which nothing greater can be conceived, is one, than which a greater can be conceived. But obviously this is impossible. Hence, there is no doubt that there exists a being, than which nothing greater can be conceived, and it exists both in the understanding and in reality.²⁹

Got it? Rene Descartes (17th century) explains,

Certainly, the idea of God, or a supremely perfect being, is one which I find within me just as surely as the idea of any shape or number. ... God can be thought of as not existing. But when I concentrate more carefully, it is quite evident that existence can no more be separated from the essence of God than ... the idea of a mountain can be separated from the idea of a valley. Hence it is just as much of a contradiction to think of God (that is, a supremely perfect being) lacking existence (that is, lacking a perfection), as it is to think of a mountain without a valley.³⁰

The basic idea seems to be that the existence of the idea of a maximally great being such as god has its own implications. If the being that you have conceived of does not actually exist, then he is not a maximally great being, as existence is a better quality to have than nonexistence. Thus, for the maximally great being to exist as an idea, he must also exist in reality.

Immanuel Kant is credited with undermining the classic ontological argument. He does so on two grounds. First, he claims that it is not exactly fair to speculate about the existence of a being or fact that by definition cannot be denied. Second, Kant claims, "'Being' is obviously not a real predicate."³¹ In other words, you cannot ascribe to a thing "existence" as a quality in the same way that you would ascribe to it "omnipotence" or appearing "red." For Kant, a thing can be red, but a thing cannot be "being."

Plantinga's Revision

However, this medieval argument has been rescued of late by none other than Alvin Plantinga. He has restated the argument in terminology that has revitalized the debate over this approach. It goes something like this:

1. It is possible that God exists.
2. If it is possible that God exists, then God exists in some possible worlds.
3. If God exists in some possible worlds, then God exists in all possible worlds.

²⁹ Anselm, *Proslogion*, chapter two.

³⁰ Rene Descartes, as found in Davies, 327.

³¹ As cited in Davies, 339.

4. If God exists in all possible worlds, then God exists in the actual world.
5. If God exists in the actual world, then God exists.

It may be helpful to take these ideas one at a time.

1. *It is possible that God exists.* By possible, we simply mean that it is conceivable. It is an idea that can be had that is not contradictory to itself. In contrast, a married bachelor cannot exist either in idea or reality.

2. *If it is possible that God exists, then God exists in some possible worlds.* Here, possible worlds means hypothetical scenarios. The only way that something can be possible (the truth affirmed by premise 1) is if there is a hypothetical scenario where the fact is true. If there is no hypothetical scenario where a thing exists, then the thing cannot possibly exist, as with the married bachelor.

3. *If God exists in some possible worlds, then God exists in all possible worlds.* By definition, God is what is called “necessary” (kind of like a definition). If God is the something-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-thought, then there can be no definition of God that makes him “contingent,” something that either could or could not exist. If God is not necessary, then he is not a maximally great being, as being necessary is greater than being contingent.

4. *If God exists in all possible worlds, then God exists in the actual world.* This follows, because the actual world must be one of the hypothetical, possible worlds. Stated negatively, the actual world cannot be an impossible world. If God exists in every possible world, then he must exist in this one, the one that is real.

5. *If God exists in the actual world, then God exists.* Defenders of this argument see it as a decisive logical and even mathematical proof of God’s existence. Skeptics see it as a word game. I personally believe the conclusion is valid, but I also doubt very many skeptics will ever be persuaded by it because it is so very complicated.

The Human Intellect Argument

Another possible starting point for discovering God is to begin with the ability to ask and analyze such a question. What is the meaning of such words as cognitive faculties, memory, perception, intuition, sympathy, introspection, testimony, induction, or moral sense? Each and every day humans make use of all of these capacities and trust them to be reliable. The theist sees this as most natural. After all, according to the Christian creation story, the human is made in the image of God (*imago dei*) and is thereby endued with divine qualities, such as intellect and awareness.

However, naturalism, the worldview that excludes god or any supernatural reality, lacks an explanation for this raw fact. Evolution could conceivably explain the animal development of the ability to feed, flee, fight, and procreate. However, there does not seem to be any evolutionary advantage to anything such as the reasoning power of humans. As Darwin himself admitted to a friend, “With me the horrid doubt always arises whether the convictions of man’s mind, which has been developed from the mind of the lower animals, are of any value or at all trustworthy. Would any one trust in the convictions of a monkey’s mind, if there are any convictions in such a mind?”³²

In the naturalistic, materialistic worldview, human perceptions and values are simply the lingering effects of neural states, the particular configuration of electrons whirling around the human nervous system. Your “ideas” are merely the content of those states. A dog also has a nervous system, and as such has neural states, the particular configuration of which must now – out of fairness to dogs – be called “ideas” or “beliefs.” If you are willing to believe that dogs have such things as beliefs, would you also be willing to believe that they are true or reliable? If not for the dog, why for the human? Why do you trust your neural state? Why do you think you can think?

³² In a letter to William Graham dated July 3rd, 1881.

In short, this argument points to a particular feature of our reality that we are well acquainted with, the human cognitive faculties. This feature is easily explained if there is a god, but not at all explained if there is not. The more sophisticated that you believe you are, the more pronounced is this fact! As Paul Davies, professor of mathematical physics, writes,

*We human beings are able to grasp at least some of nature's secrets. We have cracked part of the cosmic code. Why this should be, just why **Homo sapiens** should carry the spark of rationality that provides the key to the universe is deep enigma. We, who are children of the universe – animated stardust – can nevertheless reflect on the nature of that same universe, even to the extent of glimpsing the rules on which it runs. How we have become linked into this cosmic dimension is a mystery. Yet the linkage cannot be denied.*³³

The Moral Argument

This argument makes use of a general assumption shared by many, that there is such a thing as right and wrong. It is not necessary to agree upon what is right or wrong in every case, only that there is such a thing.³⁴ It is helpful to arrive at just one specific example. Is it wrong to rape women? Is it wrong to take advantage of the weak? Is it wrong for me to punch you in the face and steal your dinner? Some will dogmatically assert that there are absolutely no absolute moral values or truths – a silly and incoherent notion, as that itself would then be an absolute – but most will eventually concede that in their normal experience they believe in such things as morals. Otherwise, I suppose there would be a lot more face punching and dinner stealing.

Taking a specific example, say “Rape is wrong,” we have stumbled upon another feature of reality that is rather easily explained by classical theism, but completely inexplicable in the atheistic worldview. As the profound philosopher and well-known atheist Juergen Habermas wrote,

*For the normative self-understanding of modernity, Christianity has functioned as more than just a precursor or catalyst. Universalistic egalitarianism, from which sprang the ideals of freedom and a collective life in solidarity, the autonomous conduct of life and emancipation, the individual morality of conscience, human rights and democracy, is the direct legacy of the Judaic ethic of justice and the Christian ethic of love. This legacy, substantially unchanged, has been the object of a continual critical reappropriation and reinterpretation. Up to this very day there is no alternative to it. And in light of the current challenges of a post-national constellation, we must draw sustenance now, as in the past, from this substance. Everything else is idle post-modern talk.*³⁵

What if we ask the rapist, “Why have you done this thing?” Suppose he responds in the words that famous atheist Richard Dawkins used to describe human behavior, “I was merely dancing to the tune of my DNA.” We are now forced to acknowledge that evil exists, that we have no means of responding to it, and that we have no grounds by which even to rebuke it. A male mammal having intercourse, even forcefully and degradingly, with a female mammal is of no consequence and can be judged by no cosmic standard. What is the importance of the suffering of one speck-sized biped on a pale blue dot circling an otherwise inconsequential yellow star? The universe simply does not care, so why should I? Why are we distressed by the violent practices of one out of 7 billion *homo sapiens*? For that matter, why care about any of them or all of them?

Without the God who has now been dismissed, we have no basis for disgust, other than our own personal “sense” of something other, a pull we are taught to dismiss as an inherited behavior that is no nobler than the rapist’s desire to satisfy his sexual urges. In my opinion, this argument should always be mentioned when engaged in a discussion of the “problem of evil.” In this dilemma, the atheist asserts that the existence

33 Paul Davies, *The Mind of God: The Scientific Basis for a Rational World* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 232.

34 A thing may exist even without my ability to correctly analyze it. The universe does not cease existing because people disagree on its size or age.

35 Jurgen Habermas, *Religion and Rationality: Essays on Reason, God, and Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 149.

of evil demonstrates that an omnipotent, good god must not exist, or else he would banish all evil with his power, compelled by his infinite goodness. There are a variety of responses to this dilemma, but it is important to note that the argument is self-defeating. As C.S. Lewis explains, “My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? ... If the whole show was bad and senseless from A to Z, so to speak, why did I, who was supposed to be part of the show, find myself in such violent reaction against it?”³⁶

What’s more, this particular argument can be revised to fit other abstract ideas. If you don’t believe in morality, what about beauty? Is beauty real? Is it better explained by a god or through godless naturalism?

The Resurrection Argument

Another approach is an end-around beyond the scope of most philosophical arguments. Could there be an event such that if it could be known to have happened, the existence of God would be necessarily concluded from knowledge of that event? The New Testament argues for just such an event.

If there is one scientific fact that can be vouched for by the entire collection of human experience, it is the finality and inevitability of death.

Everyone dies. The dead stay dead.

There seems to be no medical exception. This is not a modern fact discovered by updated medical techniques. This is an undisputed fact derived from the sum of all human history. Thus, if this apparent fact were to be upended, if suppose a single human being were to die and then be alive again thereafter, it would be an event easily explained by the God of classical theism, but also an event impossible to explain by godless naturalism. It is no accident that Christianity has asserted the Resurrection of Jesus Christ as the definitive proof and catalyst for its faith.

But can it be proven?

N.T. Wright has written the most comprehensive examination of the Resurrection of Jesus in recent years, perhaps ever.³⁷ His argument can be summarized as follows:

1. The Jewish worldview at the time of Jesus contained a notion of resurrection, but not with the emphasis and intensity that is found in Christianity. Hellenistic culture lacked it altogether. Thus, the worldviews of the age do nothing to explain the sudden development of historical Christianity’s intense commitment to the concept of resurrection.
 2. Neither the empty tomb by itself nor the after-death appearances of Jesus could have explained the rise of Christian faith in the resurrection. Either event by itself could have been explained away without a dramatic shift in ideology. The empty tomb could be explained by theft and the appearances of Jesus might have been attributed to a ghost and/or grief induced hysteria.
 3. The combination of both the empty tomb and the appearances of Jesus after his crucifixion would provide a powerful reason for new belief in resurrection.
 4. The Jewish notion of resurrection, however weak, was definitely one of “bodily” resurrection. It is a term that would have only been applied to a risen body, once dead but now alive. It would not allow for a spiritual sense of resurrection.
 5. No other explanation offered satisfies the historical fact of Christianity’s shift toward dramatic faith in the resurrection.
 6. This lends probability to both the fact that the tomb was empty and that the disciples saw Jesus after his death.
 7. No other explanation satisfies these two facts other than an actual, historic, bodily Resurrection.
- As always, this type of argument can be assaulted by various types of skepticism, but what is accom-

36 C.S. Lewis, *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2007), 41.

37 N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003).

plished here is in establishing that the Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth passes *at least* the same standards for evidence that would be required for any other historic event, such as Caesar crossing the Rubicon. The only reason to reject the historicity of the Resurrection is an initial presumption of incredulity, a presupposition that such an event simply could not happen. Hardly an open-minded posture.

The Experience Argument

Finally, two common arguments remain to be discussed that I believe are worth a little time and consideration. Is it possible that a person might have an experience that demonstrates the existence of god?

Internal Experience

It is interesting that when all the dust has settled, many big-name Christian apologists return to this simple answer. They will say that in their personal experience, the existence of God seems intuitively obvious. Plantinga will say that he simply sees it to be apparent when he views a beautiful mountain vista. Craig will say that he believes in God, not because of his own powerful arguments, but because of the internal witness of the Holy Spirit. John Calvin wrote of the *sensus divinitatis* or “sense of divinity” that resides in every human. He claimed that even false religion was an evidence, as

they never could have succeeded in this, had the minds of men not been previously imbued with that uniform belief in God, from which, as from its seed, the religious propensity springs. . . . The most audacious despiser of God is most easily disturbed, trembling at the sound of a falling leaf. How so, unless in vindication of the divine majesty, which smites their consciences the more strongly the more they endeavor to flee from it. They all, indeed, look out for hiding-places where they may conceal themselves from the presence of the Lord, and again efface it from their mind; but after all their efforts they remain caught within the net. Though the conviction may occasionally seem to vanish for a moment, it immediately returns, and rushes in with new impetuosity, so that any interval of relief from the gnawing of conscience is not unlike the slumber of the intoxicated or the insane, who have no quiet rest in sleep, but are continually haunted with dire horrific dreams. Even the wicked themselves, therefore, are an example of the fact that some idea of God always exists in every human mind.³⁸

While not everyone claims to have this experience, it is worth considering. Why is human history filled with religion? Why are we so predisposed to believe in the invisible? Richard Dawkins argues that it is the evolutionary training of our brains that leads us to see gods in the heavens and fairies in the grass. Have all humans been so easily and completely deceived, only to be saved from their delusion by the modern skeptic who finally understands the truth?

If humans have a “sense” of the divine or an inexplicable desire for religion, then this feature of human history is easily explained by classical theism. Humanity has a god-shaped hole in its heart. In the absence of god, this feature remains a mystery.

Shared Experience

However, this internal sense is not the only proof that could be offered from experience. There is also such a thing as shared experience, or better stated, the living testimony of the life of faith shown to us by the community of believers.

Theologian Karl Barth wrote, “Theology had first to renounce all apologetics or external guarantees of its position within the environment of other sciences, for it will always stand on the firmest ground when it simply *acts* according to the law of its own being.”³⁹ Many authors have taken this notion and run quickly and passionately away from all classical Christian apologetics. However, this need not be the only interpretation of Barth. Instead, this challenge is a call to a more holistic apologetic, one wherein natural theology and philosophical studies are seen as neither preeminent nor meaningless.

³⁸ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.3.2.

³⁹ Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1979), 15.

Paul writes, “We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). The notion of “thought” surely extends beyond the raw intellect and into the emotive and the creative components of humanity. The success of Christianity has long been understood in this way, as an apologetic both of thought and of will, powerfully combining intellectually stimulating argument with heart-rending acts of self-sacrifice. Stackhouse calls this second component “corollary apologetics” and then states,

Since the Christian message fundamentally is an invitation extended to human beings (not just human brains) to encounter and embrace the person of Jesus Christ (rather than merely to adopt a doctrinal system or ideology) it is then obvious that establishing the plausibility and credibility of that message will depend upon more than intellectual argument. It will depend instead upon the Holy Spirit of God shining out through all the lamps of good works we can raise to the glory of our Father in heaven.¹

It may very well be that the missing piece in the pursuit of God is to be found in the unrivaled conduct of the Church. This moves the conflict from the realm of philosophy to the practical world of congregational life. If the Church cannot complete the unfinished task of apologetics with the communal imitation of Christ Jesus, then Christianity has no right to expect conversions in the first place. In the material world of real people and real problems, it is the reality of God incarnate in Christ and Christ incarnate in his church that steers humanity from many possible rationalities to the true and living God.

Conclusions

It is acknowledged that not a single one of these arguments is without response. Each is hotly debated. Each is susceptible to one kind of skepticism or another. The question I hope you will ask is this: am I as skeptical of every other facet of my life as I am of God? Or put another way, how much reasonableness will I have to ignore to continue ignoring God?

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¹ John G. Stackhouse, Jr., *Humble Apologetics: Defending the Faith Today* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 226.

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Do We have the “Authentic” Bible today?

Marion Fox



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All of Marion's local work has been in Oklahoma. He has preached over forty years and served the Barnes church of Christ for over thirty years, where he is now serving as an elder. He is the Director of "The Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies" and has served in this for eighteen years. He has had articles appear in the following papers: Gospel Standard, Firm Foundation, Contending for the Faith, One Heart, Gospel Preceptor, Hammer and Tongs, and Think. He has written the following books: A Study of the Biblical Flood, The Work of the Holy Spirit, Vol. I, The Work of the Holy Spirit, Vol. II, The Role of Women, Vol. I, The Role of Women, Vol. II, and The Great Commission. He has also written many outline books for OKCSBS, including: Fundamentals of the Faith, A Study of Angels, Satan, and Demons, and Logic and Debate, Biblical Hermeneutics, Homiletics, and Introduction to the Bible.

As a note of interest, Marion has engaged in six oral debates and two written debates.

A study of textual criticism (also called "lower criticism") is essential to understanding how to answer the question set forth in the subject line of this chapter. Textual criticism relates to making judgments with respect to the authenticity of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Hebrew texts of the Scriptures. We will limit our study to the Greek New Testament in this treatise.

THE AUTOGRAPHS HAVE NOT BEEN PRESERVED

Why Were the Autographs not Preserved?

Why did God not preserve the autographs of the books of the Bible? If God had preserved the autographs, some might have worshipped them. This was a problem the Children of Israel had with the brazen serpent (2 Kgs. 18:4). Hezekiah had to destroy the brazen serpent in order to stop their worship of it.

We see several religious groups treating certain things as holy relics. The Roman Catholic Church treats the shroud of Turin (supposedly the burial cloth of Jesus) as a holy relic. This shroud is almost certainly not the burial cloth of Jesus. Splinters of the cross, the garments that Jesus wore, etc. are treated as holy relics. (There was a book written about the Lord's robe entitled: "The Robe." This was made into a movie.) Men are spending much time, energy, and money searching for biblical relics (the Ark of Noah, the ark of the covenant, etc.). Look at how the Moslems and Jews have treated the tombs of Abraham and Muhammad (cf. Mt. 23:29 and Lk. 11:47).

If the autographs had been preserved, it would have been possible for some dishonest person to take possession of an autograph and modify it to support his own doctrine. How many evil men have tried to change the wording of the Bible? Note how some have: (1) Changed the wording by mistranslation, (2) Changed the wording by adding words when they preach from the Bible. (e.g. adding the word "only" to passages that teach that one is saved by faith.), (3) Changed the wording by omitting words when they preach from the Bible.

If evil men have changed the wording of the Scriptures by mistranslation, how much more dangerous would these men be, if they came to possess the only copy of the autograph? There is evidence that certain men actually changed the wording of their Greek manuscripts (MSS) on parts of the New Testament. Bur-

gon quotes Gaius (circa. 185 A.D.) who wrote about the work on one Theodotus who modified the text (pp. 323-ff.). Eusebius (Hist. Eccl. v.xxviii.) mentions certain ones who had engaged in mutilation (conjectural emendation) of the Scriptures by modifying them to teach certain false doctrines. This is cited by Metzger and Ehrman (pp. 199-200). Metzger and Ehrman also cite Origen (circa. A.D. 250):

He complains that ... the differences among the manuscripts [of the Gospels] have become great, either through the negligence of some copyists or through the perverse audacity of others; they either neglect to check over what they have transcribed, or, in the process of checking, they lengthen or shorten, as they please. (p. 200)

We must note that Origen complains about those who both lengthen and shorten the text. But, we are told (by Hort et. al.) that the scribes always lengthened the text!

What Would Have Been Required to Preserve the Autographs?

In order to preserve the autographs, it would have been necessary for God to miraculously keep the document from aging. Certainly God is able to do this, but it would require an ongoing miracle. The materials upon which the autographs were written were, for the most part, materials that are subject to decay. The early text of the Greek New Testament was written on paper, which was quite fragile. *χάρτης* (pronounced *chartēs*) “(χαράσσω), *paper*” (Thayer, p. 667) This paper was from papyrus which would become brittle and wear out with usage. The “books” of 2 Tim. 4:13 were probably papyrus scrolls, but “the parchments” were animal skins.

Preservation of the Text of the Scriptures

God made the Jews stewards of the Old Testament Scriptures (Acts 7:38 and Rom. 3:1-2). The Jewish scribes were meticulous in their copying of the text of the Hebrew and Aramaic Scriptures. There is evidence that many of the scribes of the Lord’s church were also meticulous in their copying of the text of the Greek New Testament. The *a fortiori* principle demonstrates the duty of Christians in preservation of the text of the New Testament.

First Premise: If the New Testament is greater than the Old Testament and the Jews were responsible for preserving the text of the Old Testament, then Christians are responsible for preserving the text of the New Testament.

Second Premise: The New Testament is greater than the Old Testament and the Jews were responsible for preserving the text of the Old Testament.

Conclusion: Christians are responsible for preserving the text of the New Testament.

We must love the truth in order to be saved (2 Thess. 2:10). If we love the truth, we will do our best not to allow it to be corrupted. Are we to assume that there were no scribes who loved the truth enough to preserve the text of the New Testament?

God’s Providence and the Preservation of the Text

God preserved the text of the Greek New Testament by means of providence. Note two *a fortiori* arguments that establish that the providence of God preserved the text of the New Testament. Many textual critics acknowledge that the text of the Hebrew and Aramaic Old Testament was preserved (some even claim it was preserved by the providence of God).

First Premise: If God providentially preserved the text of the Old Testament and the New Testament is a greater testament (Heb. 8:6), then God providentially preserved the text of the New Testament.

Second Premise: God providentially preserved the text of the Old Testament and the New Testament is a greater testament (Heb. 8:6).

Conclusion: God providentially preserved the text of the New Testament.

The second *a fortiori* argument relates to animals and men.

First Premise: If God providentially feeds the birds (Mt. 6:26) and man is greater than a bird, then God providentially feeds man (preserves man's spiritual food).

Second Premise: God providentially feeds the birds (Mt. 6:26) and man is greater than a bird.

Conclusion: God providentially feeds man (preserves man's spiritual food).

It is most interesting that some admit that God operates through providence (this is denied by agnostics, such as Bart Ehrman), but do not recognize that God would preserve (by His providence) the most important thing upon the Earth (His word).

WHY DO WE NEED TO STUDY TEXTUAL CRITICISM?

Many religions (that are based upon claims of extra-biblical revelation) attack the integrity of the Scriptures when they conflict with their books. This is the claim of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) when some passages conflict with their doctrine (supposedly coming from God through the RCC). The RCC claims parts of the New Testament were originally written in Aramaic. This supposedly gives them a way to escape some arguments against their doctrine from the Greek New Testament. Their claim that Peter is the rock upon which the church was built is supposedly supported, if the book of Matthew were originally written in Aramaic.

Other religions, such as the Moslems, claim to believe the Bible. However whenever the Bible conflicts with the Koran; they claim the text of the Bible has been corrupted. Mormons also claim to believe the Bible, but whenever it conflicts with Joseph Smith's writings, they claim the text of the Bible has been corrupted. In fact, neither the Moslems nor the Mormons believe the Bible. Both religious groups make this claim in order to cause the believer in the Bible to lower his defenses.

How Do Textual Variants Affect Doctrine?

There are some textual variants that would change certain aspects of the Bible. If a variant would change the doctrine of the church, it may have far-reaching effects. Since the Bible is inspired in both a verbal and plenary manner, it is imperative that we know what the Scriptures actually say.

Key doctrinal points sometimes hinge on either: the wording, the grammar, or the syntax of a passage. Of course, if a verse is removed from the text of the Bible, its doctrine is effectively removed from the Bible. If a verse is reworded, its doctrine might be changed because of a change in wording. For example, is Mk. 16:9-20 part of the original text of the book of Mark? Some translations imply that these verses should not be part of the text. Some translations have a footnote that questions whether or not these verses should be included in the book of Mark (ASV and others). Some translations place these verses in brackets with notes that question whether or not these verses should be included in the book of Mark (NASB, ESV, NRSV, NIV, etc.). These verses are included in the text of some translations without any comment (KJV, NKJV, and American Bible Union). This passage is a good "test case" for one's techniques for determining the text of the New Testament. The Majority Text view accepts these verses; the Eclectic Text view usually rejects these verses.

Other passages that are brought into question are: Jn. 7:53-8:11 (*Pericope Adulterae*), Acts 8:37, 1 Jn. 5:7, etc. The NIV and ASV omit the following verses: Mt. 17:21, 18:11, 23:14, Mk. 7:16, 9:44, 46, 11:26, 15:28, Lk. 17:36, 23:17, Jn. 5:3-4, Acts 8:37, 15:34, 24:6p-7, 28:29, and Rom. 16:24. (These verses are in footnotes.) Some of the other translations (RSV etc.) omit these verses that the NIV and ASV omit and some other verses. The removal of these verses, and other changes in the text, are not trivial matters. However, without these verses we can still learn how to be saved. Therefore the skeptic has no case against the Scriptures. Modifying the word of God is a sin (Deut. 4:2, 12:32, Pro. 30:6 and Rev. 22:18-19). I do not see how a rational person (who believed in God) would change (in any way) the word of God.

Skeptics Usage of Textual Variants to Weaken Faith

Skeptics have claimed there are thousands of textual errors in the Bible. (In actuality there are thousands of textual variants in the Bible.) Just because there are variants in the MSS, does not mean that our Greek text has thousands of errors. Suppose that we have 500 MSS for a certain book of the New Testament and 499 of them agree in their wording of a particular verse. The fact that one MS disagrees (has a variant reading) with the other 499 does not mean that our compiled text has an error. A variant does not necessarily mean that our text has errors, if we have a sound system of determining which variant is the true text.

Most of the variants are inconsequential in knowing the will of God for our salvation. Some manuscripts read: “Jesus Christ” and other manuscripts read: “Christ Jesus” (Rom. 6:23 etc.). (This is an almost inconsequential variant. This is only a change in emphasis since word order is a matter of emphasis in Greek.) One text reads “Christ Jesus” and another text reads “Christ” (Acts 24:24). (This is an inconsequential variant.)

Some manuscripts have variant spellings. In fact, some experts claim that about 75% of variants are spelling and other inconsequential variants. Most spelling variants are related to the dropping of a moveable *v* (*nu*). This would be like having the English expression: “He ate an apple” changed to read: “He ate a apple.” (This is an inconsequential variant.)

Some MSS omit Mk. 9:44 and 46, but these verses are identical to Mk. 9:48. (The words that are omitted are found elsewhere in the text of the Bible. Therefore there is nothing added [assuming {for the sake of argument} that these words do not belong in the Bible] to the text that constitutes a consequential change of the Bible.) Did Ehrman assume that Mk. 9:44 and 46 do not belong in the text and then count each MS that has these verses as one variant for each word (eleven words in each verse)? Did Ehrman count each MS that has these verses as having 22 variants? Did he multiply this (22) by the number of MSS that have these verse and come up with his number? For example, if 100 MSS have these two verses (11 words in each verse), did Ehrman multiply the 100 MSS by 22 and arrive at 2,200 textual variants? His claim is quite deceitful and misleading.

Some changes are from the plural to the singular. This occurred in Rev. 18:24 (αἷμα [pronounced *haima*] was substituted for αἷματα [pronounced *haimata*]). The plural αἷματα¹ stresses the blood of each individual prophet, whereas the singular αἷμα stresses the collective nature of the prophets. (This variant is of minor consequence in that it is only a change of emphasis.)

Some variants are the result of the substitution of a synonym for a word in the original text. This occurred in Jn. 4:1 where the word “Jesus” is substituted for the word “Lord.” (This variant is of a very minor consequence.)

Some experts claim that about 24% of textual variants are from word order and synonyms.

If 75% of the variants are spelling and other inconsequential variants and 24% are word order and synonyms, then we have about 1% that are of any consequence to understanding the message of the Scriptures.

The skeptic (agnostic) Bart D. Ehrman has written extensively about passages that do not belong in the Bible. Ehrman (possibly correctly – depending upon how one counts the variants) claims that there are about 400,000 textual variants in the New Testament.

How did Ehrman come up with the number 400,000? Did he claim that Codex B is the correct text (even when it stands alone – as Hort claimed) and then claim that the hundreds of Byzantine MSS each counts as one variant? Ehrman, being an agnostic, is either irrational (cannot properly evaluate the evidence) or he is dishonest (will not accept the truth when it is clearly articulated). In either instance, he is not a trustworthy source for information about the text of the Scriptures. Remember the old adage: “There are three kinds of lies: (1) white lies, (2) black lies, and (3) statistics.” Ehrman probably used the misleading

1 This Majority Text reading is also supported by: 046^e, 051, 1006, 1841, 2030, 2344, and f³⁵.

figure of 400,000 for its “shock value” in order to make agnostics of his readers.

Let us assume that Ehrman is correct that there are 400,000 variants in the Greek text of the New Testament. If only 1% of these variants are of any consequence, then we have 4,000 variants that are of any consequence. We have already discussed many of these variants that are of consequence. There are none of these variants that would force us to give up any doctrine of the Scriptures. (i.e. the doctrine given up by omitting these verses is taught in other passages of Scripture.)

Ehrman is probably a good example of how skeptics have used textual variants to destroy faith. Ehrman went to graduate school (Princeton) as a believer in God and left as an agnostic (skeptic). He wrote his master’s thesis on textual criticism in 1981.

Many of the professors at “our” colleges and universities studied textual criticism under professors who were skeptics (either atheists or agnostics). These skeptics have determined the rules for textual criticism. We will examine some of these basic rules later in this treatise.

Conjectural Emendation

The present system of textual criticism that is in vogue is the eclectic system. The eclectic system employs conjectural emendation to determine the correct text. The text was altered to make it conform to the theological thinking of the one emendating the text. Origen discussed these matters and Burgon (p. 323-ff.) documents his claims from quotes of some of the “church fathers.”

With regard to changes in the text, Kilpatrick wrote: “This means that the great majority of deliberate changes in the text were made at a time when our knowledge of the history of the text is slight or non-existent, namely in the latter part of the first century and in the second century A.D.” (p. 276) Kilpatrick also wrote:

Tatian is the last author to make deliberate changes in the text of whom we have explicit information. Between Tatian and Origen Christian opinion had so changed that it was no longer possible to make changes in the text whether they were harmless or not. (p. 130)

The introduction to the Nestle-Aland text (26th ed.) implicitly admits to conjectural emendation:

Decisions must be made one by one, instance by instance. This method has been characterized as eclecticism, but wrongly so. After carefully establishing the variety of readings offered in a passage and the possibilities of their interpretation, it must always then be determined afresh on the basis of external and internal criteria which of these readings (and frequently they are quite numerous) is the original, from which the others may be regarded as derivative. (p. 43)*

When the textual critic employs conjectural emendation, he is allowing his theological bias to determine which text he chooses. He is doing what some of those who corrupted the text were doing in the late 1st century and 2nd century. This is a dangerous method of textual criticism, it is subjective in nature. Different textual critics, each employing conjectural emendation, can arrive at contradictory conclusions with the same passage of Scripture. Since this is true, the system of conjectural emendation is a flawed system of textual criticism.

An Overview of Textual Criticism of the Greek New Testament

Hort postulated that there were four families of Greek manuscripts. The first family is the Byzantine family (more than 90% of the MSS are in this family, this is why it is also called the Majority Text; it is also called the Syrian Text, Eastern Text, or Koine group). “So, while it is true that about 90% of the extant New Testament manuscripts possess a text of Byzantine character, ...” (Metzger and Ehrman, p. 220) This is primarily from the Eastern Mediterranean region (the Greek speaking region). The readings of this family are quite uniform (there are not many variations). Several ancient versions follow the Majority Text. Quotes from some of the church fathers follow the Majority Text.

The second family postulated by Hort was the Alexandrian family (between 5% and 10% of the MSS are in this family). There are a large number of variations in the readings among this family. These MSS tend to be older than the Majority Text MSS. These MSS tend to subtract from the text. The false doctrine of Arianism originated in Alexandria. Some of the textual modifications conform to Arianism. This probably explains some of the corruptions of the Alexandrian family of MSS. Hort referred to this text as “the neutral text.” Regarding this supposed “neutral text” the preface of the NA-26th edition reads:

Similarly the idea of a “Neutral text” has been retired. Neither Codex Vaticanus nor Codex Sinaiticus (nor even p⁷⁵ of two hundred years earlier) can provide a guideline we can normally depend on for determining the text. The age of Westcott-Hort and of Tischendorf is definitely over! (26th ed., p. 43)*

The third family postulated by Hort was the Western family (about 5% of the MSS are in this family). There are a large number of variations in the readings among this family. These MSS are supported by some of the versions and some church fathers. These MSS tend to add to the text. Nestle, in his 25th edition text, wrote regarding this supposed family:

*... also I was not inclined to use a common sign for the so-called,, Western text, because its representatives differ too much among themselves, and are therefore better mentioned individually, as **D**, it, sy^{sc}. (p. 69)*

Nestle is saying that there is only one MS in this type (a 6th or 7th century MS **D**); therefore *de facto*, this text type does not exist.

The fourth family postulated by Hort was the Caesarean family (from Caesarea). This family has less than 5% of the MSS. This family supposedly contains mixed readings from the other families. Most authorities deny that this is a family of MSS. Nestle, in his 25th edition text, wrote regarding this supposed family: “For the Caesarean type of text which Lake, Streeter and others see represented in Θ λ ϕ 565 700, Θ stands as inclusive representative.” (p. 69) Nestle is saying that there is only one MS in this type (a 9th century MS Θ); therefore *de facto*, this text type does not exist.

Stemmatics is a system of placing N. T. Greek MSS into “stemma” (family trees). Since intermediate copies of the various MSS have been lost, we cannot construct very many “strict” family trees of MSS. All of the family trees (except the Byzantine family) are theoretical (in the mind of the textual critic [cf. the quote of Nestle’s 26th ed. with regard to the Alexandrian {neutral} text - above] and Nestle’s 25th ed. with regard to both the Western and Caesarean texts).

SOME CANONS OF TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Some Nestle-Aland Canons

Aland and Aland’s first canon is: “There is truth in the maxim: *lectio difficilior lectio potior* (‘the more difficult reading is the more probable reading’).” (Aland and Aland, p. 275)² This canon is based upon the assumption that a scribe would modify the text in order to “smooth out the readings.” If a scribe had what he deemed to be the “Very word of God” and he revered the word of God, he would not modify it in any manner. One would only try to “smooth out” readings, if he thought the MS might be corrupt, unless he were dishonest. There is no proof offered for this canon, it is pure assumption.

Aland and Aland’s second canon is: “The venerable maxim *lectio brevior lectio potior* (‘the shorter reading is the more probable reading’) is certainly right in many instances.” (Aland and Aland, p. 276)³ This canon is based upon the assumption that a scribe would be more likely to add to the text than to subtract from the text. If a scribe had what he deemed to be the “Very word of God” and he revered the word of God, he would not modify it in any manner. Adding to the text is more difficult than deleting from the text. There is no proof offered for this canon, it is pure assumption.

² This canon is also set forth by Metzger and Ehrman (pp. 302-303).

³ This canon is also set forth by Metzger and Ehrman (pp. 302-303).

Most of the modification of the text was done before A.D. 200 and was done to change the doctrine taught in the New Testament. It is much simpler to delete a verse to change what is being taught than to add a verse. I heard a preacher say that he was studying with a woman and when they got to baptism, she said: "My Bible does not say to 'repent and be baptized for remission of sins.'" The preacher replied, "let me see your Bible" (intending to show her Acts 2:38) and she had cut out Acts 2:38 from her Bible. Adding either a sentence or a word requires more thought than deleting material. Those who make this claim do not give any proof that it is true and this is one key reason they reject the Majority Text.

This rule is why the NRSV reads differently (in Mt. 27:16) than other translations.

Mt. 27:16 (NRSV) At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Jesus Barabbas.

Mt. 27:16 (ASV) And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas.

The more difficult reading (in Mt. 27:16) is Ἰησοῦν Βαραββᾶν (Nestle's 28th ed.). The Majority Text (and most modern translations) has βαραββᾶν Having the name "Jesus" attached to Barabbas was supposedly something that a scribe would omit. The reading of the Majority text is supported by: α, A, B, D, K, L, W, Γ, Δ, 33, 064, 0135, 0250, 565, 579, 700^c, 892, 1241, 1424, f¹³, f³⁵, all the Latin MSS, sy^{p,h}, all the Coptic MSS, and Or^{mss}. The Majority text is supported by many of the so-called Alexandrian family MSS. Clearly the editors of the NA-28th edition text chose a reading that is not supported by very many MSS: (Θ, f¹, 700^{*}, l 844, and sy^s). Aland and Aland spoke (almost prophetically) with regard to this mistake made in the 28th edition of the NA text:

The principle that the original reading may be found in any single manuscript or version when it stands alone or nearly alone is only a theoretical possibility. Any form of eclecticism which accepts this principle will hardly succeed in establishing the original text of the New Testament; it will only confirm the view of the text which it presupposes. (1995, p. 281)

Metzger and Ehrman seem to be so intent on establishing this canon that they go beyond the evidence with a quote of Augustine:

With commendable candor, however, Augustine declares that he is not altogether satisfied with this explanation, because "a majority of manuscripts contain the name of Jeremiah, and those who have studied the Gospel with more than usual care in the Greek copies report that they have found it to stand so in the more ancient Greek exemplars." Thereupon, Augustine virtually enunciates the critical canon that the more difficult reading is to be preferred ... (p. 202)

Augustine made two claims: (1) A majority of manuscripts contain the name of Jeremiah and (2) The ancient Greek exemplars contain the name of Jeremiah. Neither of these claims have anything to do (directly) with whether or not the reading is the more difficult reading. It merely "happens" to be the more difficult reading. Metzger and Ehrman seem so intent on proving this canon that they "beg the question" here.

Metzger and Ehrman set forth another canon of textual criticism: "Intrinsic Probabilities depend upon considerations of what the author was more likely to have written, taking into account: ... the priority of the Gospel according to Mark." (pp. 303-304)

This canon is based upon the flawed system of "higher criticism" that claims the book of Mark was the source for Matthew and Luke. The assumption is: If Mark is the source of Matthew, then Matthew was written after Mark. Any textual variant that left out something (in Mark) that was in Matthew's account must be an interpolation (if it were in some MSS).

As an example of this canon we set forth Mk. 11:26. Since the words of Mk. 11:26 are left out of some MSS, but are in Mt. 6:15, 18:35, and Lk. 11:4, they must be an interpolation. If Matthew, Mark, and Luke were given by revelation of God, then they would agree without having the same words. Metzger and Ehrman presume (with the other matters under this heading) to know what the Lord "would have said" in any given situation.

A LOGICAL EVALUATION OF THE FIRST TWO RULES

A logical evaluation of two of the N-A and Metzger-Ehrman rules of textual criticism demonstrates that these rules are both irrational. The textual canon: “The more difficult reading is the more probable reading” has logical problems. Are they saying: “All of the more difficult readings?” or “Some of the more difficult readings?” or “None of the more difficult readings?” These three options exhaust all of the logical possibilities (cf. The Square of Opposition).

In practice they do not opt for “all of the more difficult readings are the more probable readings” all of the time. They most certainly are not saying that “none of the more difficult readings are the more probable reading.” By the process of elimination, we conclude that they are logically saying: “Some of the more difficult readings are more probable readings ...”

The premise: “Some of the difficult readings are more probable readings ...” contradicts the premise: “No difficult readings are more probable reading ...” (Square of opposition) These textual critics deny the premise: “All difficult readings are more probable readings.”

From the Square of Opposition chart we draw the conclusion: “Some difficult readings are and some difficult readings are not more probable ...” Because of this conclusion, this rule tells us absolutely nothing! This rule is probably nothing more than a smoke screen to conceal their actions of “choosing what fits their fancy.”

Logically, the expression “more probable” means “more than 50% probability. (How do they know that it is “more probable?” Where is the mathematical proof that it has a probability greater than 50%?)

The textual canon: “The shorter reading is the more probable reading” has logical problems. Are the textual critics saying: “All of the shorter readings?” or “Some of the shorter readings?” or “None of the shorter readings?” These three options exhaust all of the logical possibilities. In practice they do not opt for “all of the shorter readings” all of the time.

Certainly homoeoteleuton would give a shorter text.

i-Lk. 12:18 (⌘ and D) omit some words, probably from homoeoteleuton.

ii-Lk. 24:53 (⌘ and B) omit some words, probably from homoeoteleuton.

In addition, line omission would give a shorter text. (⌘ and B) omit a line in 1 Tim. 6:5. They most certainly are not saying that “none of the shorter readings are the more probable reading.” By the process of elimination, we conclude that they are logically saying: “Some of the shorter readings are more probable reading ...”

The premise: “Some of the shorter readings are more probable readings ...” linked with a denial of the premise: “All of the shorter readings are more probable readings” implies that “Some of the shorter readings are not more probable reading ...” (Square of opposition) This leaves us with the conclusion: “Some of the shorter readings are and some of the shorter readings are not more probable ...” Because of this conclusion, this rule tells us absolutely nothing! This rule is probably nothing more than a smoke screen to conceal their actions of “choosing what fits their fancy.”

Logically, the expression “more probable” means “more than 50% probability. (How do they know that it is “more probable?” Where is the mathematical proof that it has a probability greater than 50%?)

A CONSIDERATION OF TWO ADDITIONAL CANONS OF TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Souter set forth the following canon that has been used by later textual critics: “Community of error is then the sole ground of relationship, and the greater that community the closer the relationship.” (Souter, p. 105) This canon (rule) neglects the fact that, if one were copying from the autograph and he copied accurately; the two MSS would agree, but would not have errors. There is one situation when we would not look for “community of error” (when we have the autographs).

If my claim that the early church made many exact copies of the books of the New Testament is correct

(Fox, 2005, Appendix B), then we would have “a community of agreement” that was a ground for relationship.

A second canon is based upon a logical fallacy committed when arguing from Colwell’s Rule. Unsound reasoning is applied to Colwell’s rule and some unwarranted conclusions are drawn.

Definite predicate nouns which precede the verb usually lack the article ... a predicate nominative which precedes the verb cannot be translated as an indefinite or a “qualitative” noun solely because of the absence of the article; if the context suggests that the predicate is definite, it should be translated as a definite noun ... (Colwell, p. 20)

Colwell “is frequently regarded as the father of modern American NT textual criticism.” (D. Wallace, p. 260) Basically, the textual critic argues; if two different manuscripts exist where one has the article and the other does not, the textual critic will reject the one with an article with the predicate nominative that he deems to be definite. Note the following logical conclusion derived from Greek grammar-syntax.

First Premise: If a noun is articular, then the noun is definite. (This premise is true)

By transposition, this premise becomes: If a noun is not definite, then it is not articular.

From this premise some have committed the fallacy of “affirming the consequent” in drawing the following conclusion: Unsound Premise: If the noun is definite, then the noun is articular. This is a common mistake made by elementary Greek students.

“It is not necessary for a noun to have the article in order for it to be definite. But conversely, a noun *cannot* be *indefinite* when it has the article. Thus it *may* be definite without the article, and it *must* be definite with the article.” (Wallace, p. 243)

Some have reasoned:

First Premise: If a definite predicate nominative precedes the verb, then the predicate nominative is anarthrous.

They have reasoned that if a definite predicate nominative has the article, it must be a corrupted text. (Assumption: “All definite predicate nominatives are anarthrous.”) What is Colwell saying? “Definite predicate nouns which precede the verb usually lack the article ...” Logically, the word “usually” means “more than 50% of the time. There are only four possible ways one can word a proposition (cf. the Square of Opposition):

The word “usually” does not mean “all the time.”

The word “usually” does not mean “none of the time.”

The word “usually” means “some of the time.” (with two possibilities)

From the “square of opposition chart” we learn that this implies that some of the time the definite predicate nominative is articular. This is discussed in Fox (2005, pp. 507-508).

Colwell’s Rule is useless in textual criticism. From the “square of opposition chart” it is obvious that no logical conclusion can be derived from Colwell’s Rule. From the Square of Opposition we derive the following: (1) Some definite predicate nominatives are anarthrous. and (2) Some definite predicate nominatives are not anarthrous.

Since one cannot logically draw a sound conclusion from Colwell’s rule, it is useless in textual criticism. Colwell’s Rule is based upon subjectivism because one has to go to the context to determine when we have a predicate nominative is definite. “... if the context suggests that the predicate is definite, it should be translated as a definite noun ...” (Colwell, p. 20) The determination of the context is usually subjective in nature. This makes the application of Colwell’s Rule to be subjective.

Four of the basic rules of textual criticism have been shown to be irrational. Therefore we need to reject all systems of textual criticism based upon any one or more of these rules. Those who use the four canons of textual criticism are also irrational and we ought to be wary of accepting their arguments (until we have

carefully scrutinized them).

IS THE BYZANTINE TEXT A 4th CENTURY RECENSION?

Hort claimed the Byzantine text was a 4th century recension. Note the following logical argument regarding this question:

Either the intentional corruption of the text ended before A.D. 200 or it continued after A.D. 200.

Most textual critics claim that it ended before A.D. 200.

Therefore the readings of the Majority Text existed prior to A.D. 200.

Textual critics are forced to claim that the Majority Text is a recension, if they reject it. The problem with this claim is that they do not have a single shred of evidence to support this claim. A lack of evidence does not seem to bother these textual critics. These textual critics have already demonstrated that they are irrational by their usage of the four canons that were shown to be irrational. If all of the readings of the Majority Text existed prior to A.D. 200 and it is not a recension, then we can claim that it is not a late text.

All of the readings of the Majority Text existed prior to A.D. 200.

There is no evidence that the Majority Text is a recension (by Lucian of Antioch).

There is no evidence that the Majority Text is of a late text.

The claim that the Majority Text is a 3rd or 4th century recension has the following logical errors: (1) It “begs the question” (assumes what they are trying to prove). and (2) It asks us to accept their claim without any evidence. In effect, they claim to be an authority that can issue claims without them being questioned.

Assume (only for the sake of argument) that the Majority Text is a 3rd or 4th century recension, how do we know that it is not a correct recension? Metzger and Ehrman wrote: “*Recension* is the selection after examination of all available material, of the most trustworthy evidence on which to base a text.” (p. 205) The NA and UBS texts are recensions, and they claim to be superior texts. With the existence of many Greek MSS in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, how do we know that the Byzantine text was not a correct recension? Clearly the 3rd century textual critics (those making the hypothetical Byzantine recension) would have hundreds (perhaps thousands) of MSS that we do not have today.

Therefore, if (hypothetically) someone were to prove that the Majority Text is a 3rd or 4th century recension, it would not necessarily prove it is an inferior text. The 3rd century textual critics (those hypothetically making the Byzantine recension) would have more accurate knowledge of what intentional changes had been made by ones who were purposefully corrupting the text. (They could reject those MSS that had been corrupted.)

Why is there no historical evidence of such a recension (supposedly by Lucian of Antioch)? If a recension corrupted the text, surely the church would have objected to this corruption.

Colwell claims that modern textual critics only have two canons.

Today textual criticism turns for its final validation to the appraisal of individual readings, in a way that involves subjective judgment. The trend has been to emphasize fewer and fewer canons of criticism. Many moderns emphasize only two. These are: 1) that reading is to be preferred which best suits the context, and 2) that reading is to be preferred which best explains the origin of all others. These two rules are nothing less than concentrated formulas of all that the textual critic must know and bring to bear upon the solution of his problem. The first rule about choosing what suits the context exhorts the student to know the document he is working on so thoroughly that its idioms are his idioms, its ideas as well known as a familiar room. The second rule about choosing what could have caused the other readings requires that the student know everything in Christian history which could lead to the creation of a variant reading. This involves knowledge of institutions, doctrines, and events. ... This is knowledge of complicated and often conflicting forces and movements. (pp. 4-5)

Does any person have these qualifications?

Metzger and Ehrman wrote:

The Byzantine text is characterized by lucidity and completeness. Those who framed this text over a long period of time sought to smooth away any harshness of language, to combine two or more divergent readings into one expanded reading (called conflation), and to harmonize divergent parallel passages. (pp. 279-280)

Metzger and Ehrman merely assume that someone framed this text over a long period of time. This is nothing, but pure “begging the question!” From a text written by the guidance of the Holy Spirit one would expect: lucidity, completeness, and no harshness of language (precisely what we see in the Byzantine text).

ANALOGIES

I do not set forth these analogies to prove anything, but merely to illustrate what is happening in the area of textual criticism. Atheists and agnostics refuse to accept overwhelming evidence that organic macro-evolution cannot occur. Why do they reject this evidence? They reject this evidence because of what it will cost them. They will find it necessary to believe in a Creator and to be responsible to that Creator for their actions. Atheists and agnostics also refuse to accept overwhelming evidence that uniformitarian geology is not true. Again, these atheists and agnostics have “counted the cost” of believing in God and decided that they want to “enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”

The basic reasons these textual critics have for rejecting the Majority Text have been demonstrated to be unsound. Why have these textual critics admitted this point, but not rejected their compiled text (the UBS/NA text)? Many of these textual critics are either atheists or agnostics and they will have to rethink their atheism or agnosticism.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As I studied these matters, I purchased the books by Aland-Aland and Metzger-Ehrman in order to hear their arguments. One must hear both sides before he can make a righteous judgment (Pro. 18:13). I found the arguments of these textual critics to be irrational (they committed logical errors – used invalid reasoning). Because their rationale was based upon unsound reasoning, I knew their system of textual criticism was flawed. I highly recommend the book by Pickering because I have found his logic to be sound. In addition, Pickering gives rational replies to many of the arguments of his opponents. All gospel preachers should purchase and diligently study this book by Wilbur Pickering!

I prefer to call these textual critics who reject the arguments for the Byzantine (Majority) Text “textual agnostics.” These textual critics do not think that we either have or can have the original text of the New Testament.

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God's Word, by Prophecy

Marion Fox



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All of Marion's local work has been in Oklahoma. He has preached over forty years and served the Barnes church of Christ for over thirty years, where he is now serving as an elder. He is the Director of "The Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies" and has served in this for eighteen years. He has had articles appear in the following papers: Gospel Standard, Firm Foundation, Contending for the Faith, One Heart, Gospel Preceptor, Hammer and Tongs, and Think. He has written the following books: A Study of the Biblical Flood, The Work of the Holy Spirit, Vol. I, The Work of the Holy Spirit, Vol. II, The Role of Women, Vol. I, The Role of Women, Vol. II, and The Great Commission. He has also written many outline books for OKCSBS, including: Fundamentals of the Faith, A Study of Angels, Satan, and Demons, and Logic and Debate, Biblical Hermeneutics, Homiletics, and Introduction to the Bible.

As a note of interest, Marion has engaged in six oral debates and two written debates.

Introduction

Because prophecies and prophets are so much a part of the Scriptures, one cannot understand the message of the Scriptures without understanding the work of a prophet and the nature of prophesying.

True prophecy has the power to lead people out of darkness and into the light of truth. True prophecy has the power to produce faith in the hearts of those hearing (or reading) the prophecy.

DEFINITIONS OF SOME OF THE WORDS

Lexical definitions of the words translated "prophet."

The Hebrew word נביא (pronounced *nabiy*) "spokesman, speaker, prophet" (BDBG, p. 611)

The Greek word προφήτης "πρόφημι, to speak forth, speak out; hence prop. 'one who speaks forth' □ hence *an interpreter or spokesman for God; one through whom God speaks.*" [Thayer, p. 553])

The English word "prophet" means: "Gr. *prophētēs*, fr. *pro* for + *phanai* to speak - ... 1. : one who utters divinely inspired revelations ..." (Merriam-Webster, 10th ed.)

Definitions of the word "prophet" from usage in the Scriptures.

A prophet is the same as a seer (1 Sam. 9:9). The Hebrew word ראה (pronounced *raw-aw*) is translated *seer* "verb see" (BDBG, p. 906) The Hebrew word חזה (pronounced *kho-zeh*) is also translated *seer* "see, behold ... see, perceive with the eyes ... perceive with the inner vision, ...see a vision..." (BDBG, p. 302)

The prophet would see the message that God was delivering and then function as a prophet (spokesman for God) in delivering the message to men. God defined a prophet as a spokesman for another (Ex. 7:1-2). True prophets were spokesmen for God. False prophets only claimed to be spokesmen for God.

EVIDENCES THAT ONE IS A TRUE PROPHET OF GOD

The first evidence that one is a true prophet of God is that everything he said will be in harmony with the revealed will of God (Deut. 13:1-4). God did not allow a true prophet to preach error (Num. 22:18). Since

God cannot lie (Tit. 1:2 and Heb. 6:18) and for one to contradict himself is a lie, a spokesman for God cannot contradict another spokesman for God. The apostles were prophets (spokesmen for God); therefore they were guided into all truth (Jn. 16:12-14). True prophecy cannot contradict other true prophecy. From this it is determined that no interpretation of prophecy is correct that contradicts the Scriptures in any way.

The second evidence that one is a true prophet of God is that he will perform signs that always come about (Deut. 18:21-22). Signs confirmed the words of true prophets (Mk. 16:20). God was bearing witness with their testimony (Heb. 2:4). Prophecy actually proves the existence of God (cf. Isa. 41:23).

The third evidence that one is a true prophet of God is that true prophets of God could discern the spirits (1 Cor. 14:37). Their work was not only to reveal the truth, but to expose false prophets. The people of God needed to know what message truly came from God and what message did not come from God (His prophets demonstrated both). I once encountered a group that met together in a Bible study where some of the group claimed to be prophets and they taught contradictory (contradictory to one another) doctrines. I pointed out their contradictions and that none of them could be true prophets because they had endorsed another who taught doctrines that contradicted what they taught. (One group properly taught that there are three persons in the Godhead and another group taught that there is only one person in the Godhead, yet they endorsed one another.)

THE NATURE OF TRUE PROPHECY

Aspects of True Prophecy

The first aspect of prophecies is that some prophecies were conditional. For example, Jonah preached that Nineveh would be destroyed (Jon. 3:4). Jonah had fled from preaching to Nineveh because he knew his prophecies would be conditional (Jon. 4:2). Many times God warned His people (through a prophet) that if they did not repent, they would be punished.

The second aspect of prophecies is that some prophecies were unconditional. For example, the virgin birth was unconditional (it would occur no matter what man did – Isa. 7:14). In addition, Jesus being born in Bethlehem was unconditional (Mt. 2:5-6).

How God Spoke to a Prophet

God spoke to the prophets in more than one manner (Num. 12:6-8). First, He spoke face-to-face (Ex. 33:11 and Deut. 5:4). Second, He spoke in visions and dreams to the prophets (Num. 12:6). Third, He spoke in dark speeches (Num. 12:8) “riddle, enigmatic, perplexing saying or question” (Brown, Driver, Briggs, Gesenius, p. 295). Fourth, He spoke in similitudes through the prophets (Hos. 12:10).

How God Spoke Through (by) the Prophets

God spoke through the prophets in diverse manners (Heb. 1:1). The words of prophecies were of two basic kinds. First, some prophecies were couched in figurative language (Rev. 1:1, Jn. 12:33, etc.). Second, some prophecies were spoken in literal language (Isa. 7:14).

The prophets wrote the Scriptures with several different kinds of literature: (1) Historical narratives (Genesis, Esther, Acts, etc.), (2) Poetry (Job, Psalms, etc.), (3) Proverbs, (4) Statements of laws, ordinances, etc. (Exodus, Lev., etc.), (5) Apocalyptic literature (Daniel, Revelation, etc.), and (6) Dialogues (parts of Job etc.). All of the basic hermeneutical principles used to determine if language is either literal or figurative are to be employed with the words of prophecies.

Characteristics of True Prophecy

True prophecy must reveal something that man cannot know without the aid of God. For example, Daniel revealed the contents of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (Dan. 2:26-28). Agabus revealed that a famine would occur (Acts 11:28).

Prophecy is not just observing the events, actions, etc. and then extrapolating from them to predict what will occur (cf. Mt. 16:2-3). First, the thing prophesied must be beyond the control of the prophet to manipulate (which could occur if it occurred long after his death or was physically impossible for man to do). Second, the thing prophesied must be specific enough to be beyond the realm of chance. (e.g. To say that a brown-eyed man will be elected president of the United States in the next 20 years is not specific enough.)

PROPHESYING ENTAILED THREE BASIC THINGS

First, prophesying entailed revealing truth about the past that the human writer may not have experienced. The book of Genesis is a revelation of truth about the beginning of things up to the time the children of Israel entered Egypt. God gave this information to Moses by revelation. The apostles were given an infallible memory concerning the things Jesus had said to them (Jn. 14:26). Most of these things could not be known without the aid of God. The mere “passing of these things along by word of mouth” would not provide inerrant information to be given to us about these matters. This is why God miraculously guided the memories of the apostles (even though they had heard what Jesus said).

Second, prophets revealed truth about the present in order to affect the lives of people living when the prophet spoke. They revealed truth in order to bring about repentance on the part of the wicked (Ezek. 3:16-19). They revealed truth in order to bring about repentance on the part of the righteous who had been caught up in sin (Ezek. 3:20-21). Prophets delivered the message of repentance to Israel (2 Kgs. 17:13). This is an example of a conditional prophecy.

Third, prophets revealed truth about things of the future in order to give evidence to people who would live after the Scriptures were completed that the Scriptures were written by men who were guided by the Holy Spirit. (This is what most people commonly think of when they hear the word “prophecy.”) Some of these prophecies did not have immediate application (1 Pet. 1:10-12). Even the angels did not understand the things that did not have immediate application (1 Pet. 1:10-12). These things were a “mystery” until revealed in the New Testament (Rom. 16:25-26). Some of these prophecies had immediate application (Acts 13:9-12).

There are several kinds of future prophecies: (1) Types in the Old Testament served as a revelation of future truth (the antitype – cf. Hos. 11:1 and Mt. 2:15), (2) The prophets prophesied by means of timeless principles (Pro. 14:34 and Gal. 6:7-9). This is what happened to Judas (Acts 1:20). This is the only kind of prophecy that is fulfilled more than one time.

Those who claim there are multiple fulfillments of prophecies (except with timeless truths) have no rational hermeneutical principle to which they can appeal for their claims of multiple fulfillments. Double fulfillment of prophecy makes God the author of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33). Double fulfillment of prophecy makes God to be deceptive.

Frequently God used the perfect tense to speak of the future because it was so certain that He could speak of it as if it had already occurred (Rom. 4:17).

PROPHESYING ENDED IN THE FIRST CENTURY

Paul revealed that prophesying would end in 1 Cor. 13:8-10. This passage will not be developed in this outline. This passage obviously speaks of prophesying ceasing at some time.

Paul also revealed that prophesying would end in Eph. 4:8-14. This passage will not be developed in this outline. This passage obviously speaks of prophesying ceasing at some time. These two passages were discussed extensively in my two volumes: *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, Vols. 1 & 2.

Logical argument derived from this point:

First Premise: If prophesying ceased in the first century A. D., then anyone who claims to be a prophet (after that time) is a false prophet.

Second Premise: Prophesying ceased in the first century A. D.

Conclusion: Anyone who claims to be a prophet (after that time) is a false prophet. (This proves that Mohammed, Joseph Smith, the Pope, etc. are not true prophets; they are false prophets.)

Anyone who claims to be a prophet after the first century, is a false prophet because his claims contradict the Scriptures. This is why a study of the end of miracles is so important.

FULFILLED PROPHECIES PROVES THE BIBLE IS INSPIRED OF GOD

The Nature of Predictive Prophecies

Some prophecies were merely the revelation of instructions from God to His people without any predictive prophecies. There is a common misconception that prophecy is merely the predicting of the future. Isaiah defines predictive prophecy (Isa. 41:21-24). This passage of Scripture contains a challenge to idols to produce evidence of their power. It must be exactly fulfilled as it was given. This is the test of a true prophet (Deut. 13:1-9, 18:20-22, Jer. 28:8-9, and Gal. 1:6-9). It must involve proper timing (preceding the fulfillment by enough time to be more than an educated guess). It must have specific details which can be checked out without vague generalities.

Types of Predictive Prophecy

The first type of predictive prophecies is unconditional prophecies, God states what will happen regardless of what man does. The second type of predictive prophecies is conditional prophecies, God states what will happen if man does not repent or what will happen if man turns from serving God. Or God states what will happen if man obeys God (e. g. Israel was promised protection, if they were obedient to God.)

Prophecies That Have Been Fulfilled

The following are several (out of literally hundreds of prophecies) prophecies that have been fulfilled: (1) The Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2). This was fulfilled in Mt. 2:1-6; (2) The Messiah was to be met with unbelief (Isa. 53:1). This was fulfilled in Jn. 12:37; (3) The Messiah would be betrayed by a disciple (Ps. 41:9). This was fulfilled in Mk. 14:43-49 and Jn. 13:18; (4) His disciples would be scattered when He was taken (Zech. 13:7). This was fulfilled in Mk. 14:50 and Mt. 26:31; (5) Jesus would be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12-13). This was fulfilled in Mt. 27:3-10; (6) The betrayer should return his price (Zech. 11:12-13). This was fulfilled in Mt. 27:3-10; (7) The price the betrayer received would be used to purchase a field (Scripture references above). The field would be purchased from a potter. The field would be used as a cemetery; (8) Isaiah prophesied that Cyrus would rebuild Jerusalem, in about 700 B.C. (Isa. 44:28). This was fulfilled in 606 B.C. (Ezra 1:1-2); (9) Jeremiah prophesied of 70 years of captivity in Babylonia (Jer. 25:11 and 29:10). This was fulfilled in 606 B.C. (Ezra 1:1-2-above); (10) In 586 B.C. Ezekiel prophesied that the city of Tyre would be destroyed. Ezekiel gave details of the destruction (Ezek. 26:1-6). Many nations were to come against Tyre like the waves of the sea (Ezek. 26:3). This implies that these nations would not come all at one time, but in succession. First the Babylonian army under Nebuchadnezzar came against Tyre. The inhabitants of Tyre used their ships to move to the fortified island just off the coast. Finally the army of Alexander the Great used the rubble from the old city to build a causeway from the mainland to the island, in 334 B.C. Just before the causeway was finished the inhabitants of the island city deserted the city in their ships and fled. His soldiers literally scraped the ground clean to obtain material to construct the causeway. Even today, there is no city on the location of where ancient Tyre was located. There is a city near the old location (several kilometers away). Fishermen dry their nets on the bare rock which was scraped clean by the army of Alexander the Great; and (11) To these prophecies can be added literally hundreds of other prophecies.

Were These Prophecies Written "After the Fact?"

Anyone who rejects the Bible as their sole authority in spiritual matters (Roman Catholics, Moslems, Mormons, etc.) must reject the inerrancy of the Scriptures. This means that they must have these prophe-

cies being uttered “after the fact” or they must have the Scriptures to have been corrupted. (This point is covered in the previous lesson.)

There are several factors that prove that these prophecies were uttered when the Scriptures claim they were uttered: (1) The historical accuracy of the books could not be accounted for if they were written hundreds of years, or even over 1,000 years after the events recorded in the book. The writers of the Old Testament books give details about kings, wars, geography, customs, etc. which would certainly be wrong if they were written hundreds of years after the fact. Archeological evidences are confirming the historical accuracy of the Scriptures. In no instance has genuine archeological evidence contradicted the Scriptures, and (2) The Jews would certainly have rejected these books, without evidence that they were written during the time period in which they were claimed to have been written.

Mathematical Probability and Prophecies

Mathematical probability demonstrates that literally hundreds of prophecies could not have been “mere coincidence.” Assuming that the prophecies were nothing more than guesses one would have a probability of $1/2 = 0.5$ for each guess. The overall probability that a number of such prophecies would accidentally be correct is: $P_t = P_1 \times P_2 \times P_3 \times \dots \times P_n$

In order to obtain a probability of 1 part in 1×10^{50} (a probability that statisticians claim cannot occur) it is necessary to have 167 such prophecies. The Bible contains over 300 prophecies of Jesus the Christ, with many other prophecies about a number of other things.

PROPHECIES OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

Old Testament Prophecies

First, David prophesied of the resurrection of the Messiah (Psalm 2). He spoke of the attitude of the rulers who conspired against Jehovah and the Messiah (verses 1-3). The Lord’s response to their conspiracy is set forth in verses 4-6. The response of the Son (Messiah) is set forth in verses 7-9 (refer to Acts 13:33-34). Acts 13:33-34 gives evidence of the Sonship of Messiah. This is not saying that Jesus became His Son at the resurrection, but that He was declared to be (proven to be) His Son (Rom. 1:4). Paul discussed His resurrection in connection with Ps. 2:7 (Heb. 1:5). The prophet David admonished them to serve God (accept His Messiah as king-verses 10-12).

Second, David prophesied of the resurrection of the Messiah (Ps. 16:8-11). Peter applied Ps. 16:8-11 to Jesus the Christ (Acts 2:25-28). Peter makes various arguments about this prophecy David has not been resurrected (his tomb is still with us-Acts 2:29). This easily applies to the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 2:29-36). The apostle Paul also applied this to the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 13:35-37). This cannot refer to David, since his body decayed (corrupted). This is a prophecy of One whose body would not decay (corrupt). There is no way this can refer to anything except a resurrection from the dead.

New Testament Prophecies

Jesus spoke of His fleshly body as a temple (Jn. 2:19-22). Jesus said He would take His life up again (Jn. 10:17). Jesus spoke of rising after three days (Mt. 16:21, Mk. 10:33-34, and Luke 18:33). The chief priests and Pharisees understood these prophecies (Mt. 27:62-64).

The Sanhedrin Implicitly Admitted that He was Resurrected

The Sanhedrin accused the apostles of bringing the blood of Jesus upon their heads (Acts 5:28). The expression “to bring the blood of another person upon one’s head” means to be guilty of murder. This expression is found 15 times in the Scriptures, in every instance it means to be guilty of murder. This expression means to be guilty of murder: Josh. 2:19, 2 Sam. 1:16, 1 Kgs. 2:9, 32, 33, 37, and Ezek. 33:4. The Jewish leaders had asked that the blood of Jesus be upon their heads (Mt. 27:24-25). This is in spite of the fact that Pilate had declared Jesus to be innocent (Mt. 27:24). They admitted the guilt of killing Jesus and accepted

the guilt. They had crucified Jesus because of the charge of blasphemy (Mt. 26:65-66 and Jn. 19:6-7). If Jesus were not the Son of God, then he was guilty of a crime for which the Law of Moses prescribed the death penalty (Lev. 24:16, Deut. 18:20, etc.). Their objection of Acts 5:28 implies that they were admitting that the apostles had proven that Jesus was resurrected, therefore Jesus was a prophet, therefore they were guilty of murder to kill Him.

Discernment of the Thoughts of the Heart

One sign that is not often recognized by Bible readers is the discernment of the thoughts of the heart. Paul set forth this sign as one mark of a prophet (1 Cor. 14:24-25). Sarah had the thoughts of her heart revealed (Gen. 18:12-15). Note that, at this point in time, Sarah doubted and did not show faith. After this incident, she developed faith that she would have a baby (Heb. 11:11-12). Some ask: "What evidence did Sarah see that caused her to have faith?" It is likely that the knowledge of the thoughts of her heart was sufficient to produce her faith. However, absence of evidence of what produced her faith is not evidence of absence. There may have been other evidence that the Scriptures do not give account of, but this was probably sufficient to produce her faith. Note that her faith caused her to receive: "...power to conceive ..."

God revealed the thoughts of the king of Syria to Elisha (2 Kgs. 6:8-12). God was revealing, to the prophet Elisha, where the king of Syria would attack. This provided evidence to the king of Israel, and indirectly to the king of Syria of Elisha's credentials and of the power of Jehovah.

Jesus revealed private information to Nathanael (Jn. 1:45-50). The Lord's knowledge of private information, regarding Nathanael, was sufficient to prove to Nathanael that Jesus was the Son of God, the King of Israel (i.e. the Messiah). Jesus told Nathanael that he would see greater miracles and evidences that this one. The apostles needed a great faith to endure the trials they would go through.

Jesus revealed private information to the woman at the well (Jn. 4:15-29). Some think that Jesus only revealed to her the fact that she had five husbands, but they are arguing from silence. The woman said: "Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did ..." It appears that Jesus gave her more information than the fact that she had five husbands. Perhaps, Jesus told her secrets about each of her five husbands and/or secrets about her as well (that only she would know).

Peter revealed the thoughts of the hearts of both Ananias and Saphira (Acts 5:1-11). The apostles (Peter here) were privy to private information about a person (such as their secret plan to lie to God). This brought great fear upon the whole church (Acts 5:11).

We are not to fear a false prophet (Deut. 18:21-22), this means that we are to fear a true prophet. Even the miracles that that apostles worked caused the people to fear (Acts 2:43).

SUMMARY

A true prophet or seer is a spokesman for God. What a true prophet of God taught was always in harmony with the Scriptures. A true prophet of God always showed signs (miracles) to confirm that God was with him and speaking through him. A true prophet would discern and expose a false prophet.

True prophets uttered both conditional and unconditional prophecies. God revealed His messages to His prophets in several different ways. The type of literature in which the prophecies are found is varied (prophecies are found in all types of literature).

True prophecy entailed the revelation of something that man could not know without the aid of God. Prophecies entailed the revelation of things relating to: the past, the present, and the future.

Prophesying ended in the first century A. D. and therefore, anyone who claims to be a prophet (since that time) is a false prophet.

The fulfilled prophecies in the Scriptures provide irrefutable evidence that the Scriptures are the very word of God. The Scriptures are sufficient evidence of the existence of God.

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God's Word, by Science

Byran Hodge



BRYAN HODGE was born in Blytheville, AR on May 3, 1965. The family moved much as he grew up, due to this father's work with the Army/Air Force Exchange Service. The family finally settled in Texas, mostly in South Texas. He attended Cedar Valley College, University of Texas – San Antonio; and the Brown Trail School of Preaching where he graduated.

Bryan and Melinda (Wilson) were married on February 13, 1988 and they have three children: Jasmine Juneau who is married and has one child (Fort Worth, TX); Jasper Hodge (Forth Worth, TX); and Chloe Hodge (Denton, TX).

He started preaching in 1991 and has done local work with the church of Christ in La Junta, CO; Savannah, TN; Truth or Consequences, New Mexico; Talco, TX; Marshall, TX; Anchorage, AK; and is now working with the church of Christ in Youngsport (Killeen), Texas. He has preached in gospel meetings and lectureships in: Texas, Arkansas, Mississippi, Tennessee, Alaska, Wyoming, and Louisiana; he has also preached overseas in: India, Jamaica, Ghana, Panama, and England. He has written articles appearing in: the Gospel Journal, Think Magazine (Focus Press), Bulletin Digest, Bulletin Briefs, The Guide, The Apologist. This is Bryan's first time to speak on our lectureship.

In 2012 Bryan had a debate with Kevin Miller a Seventh Day Adventist.

An interesting event which he noted, is his website – bryanhodge.net; internet radio: Great Bible Texts on thegospelradionetwork.org. Melinda works for Central Texas College in the Hospitality and Culinary Arts Department.

This is Bryan's first time to speak on our lectureship.

Papyrus Ebers was a medical book written in Egypt about 1552 B.C. It contains various prescriptions for various maladies. Some, no doubt, were helpful. Others were not. S.I. McMillen has written, "To save victims bitten by poisonous snakes, physicians of that day gave them 'magic water' to drink – water that had been poured over a special idol. To embedded splinters they applied worm's blood and asses' dung. Since dung is loaded with tetanus spores, it is little wonder that lockjaw took a heavy toll of splinter cases" (None of These Diseases, p. 9).

Heroditus was a 5th century B.C. historian. He is widely referred to as "The Father of History." He is considered an important ancient source. Yet, relying on second hand information at times – his writings speak of ants in India the size of foxes that bring up gold from the earth (3:102), and sheep in Arabia with tails so long the shepherds made wooden carts for them to prevent their dragging the ground (3:113).

Galen was the most famous physician of the 2nd century A.D. His writings were studied as textbooks in medical schools for over 1,000 years. Galen learned much by dissecting animals, but he was unable to dissect human bodies under Roman law. This caused errors in his understanding of the human body. Andreas Vesalius, in the 16th century, found that Galen had made over 200 scientific mistakes (John Hudson Tiner, Exploring the History of Medicine, p. 20).

Adam Clark was a Methodist commentator. He speculated that the moon was inhabited by intelligent beings (commenting on Genesis 1:16). It is easy to find scientific mistakes in ancient books, books which were written prior to certain discoveries.

The Bible is an ancient book, which was written before many modern discoveries. Yet, it contains amazing accuracy. While the Bible was not written to be a science book, we should expect such accuracy. This is the case, because claims to be from God, the architect of nature and the material universe.

Geography / Oceanography

1. “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together in one place, and let dry land appear” (Genesis 1:9). Today, we know that the oceans are not really separate bodies of water, but joined together. How did Moses know this without advanced cartography or satellite technology?
2. “It is He who sits above the circle of the earth...” (Isaiah 40:22). The word “circle” (Khuwg) could be rendered “sphere.” Pythagoras (6th century B.C.) is generally credited with being the first to have suggested a round earth. Aristotle (4th century B.C.) supported the theory with observations one such observation was that during a lunar eclipse, the earth’s shadow is round. Eratosthenes (3rd century B.C.) built on their ideas and calculated the circumference of the Earth with remarkable accuracy (todayifoundout.com). Some through the years have thought that the earth is flat. The Bible did not make this mistake.

Critics point out that the Bible speaks of the four corners of the earth (Isaiah 11:12; Revelation 7:1). However, such does not suggest that the earth is flat. Instead, it is “phenomenal language” of direction (N, S, E, W). Even today, we use “phenomenal language” when we speak of the rising and setting of the sun.

Critics have pointed out that the Bible speaks of “ends of the earth” (Deuteronomy 13:7; 28:49; 28:64; 33:17; Job 38:13; Psalm 2:8; 22:17; 48:10; 59:13; 61:2; 65:5; 72:8). However, it should be pointed out the “ends” can refer to the “extremities.” The wording can also be used to refer to the whole of something, in this case the earth.

Critics point out that the word “circle” (Khuwg) does not literally mean a “sphere” (a three-dimensional shape), but a “circle” (a two-dimensional shape). This is technically true. However, the Hebrew language contained no specific word for “sphere.” Moreover, if one insists that the word be rendered “circle,” and not “sphere” – fine. How does the earth appear from space? If an astronaut looked upon the planet from space would it not appear circular? Absolutely!

Critics have suggested that if a “sphere” were intended, then the Hebrews word *duwr*, which is translated “ball” in Isaiah 22:18, should have been used. However, this term no more refers specifically to three dimensions than does the other (cf. Isaiah 29:3). The word simply refers to a round shape.

3. “You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen – even the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea that passes through the paths of the sea” (Psalm 8:6-8). What are the paths of the sea? This is what Matthew Fountaine Maury (1806-1873) asked himself as he listened to Psalm 8:8 being read. This passage inspired him to discover and chart ocean currents. “Consider, for example, the gulf stream. The Gulf Stream flows from the east coast of North America toward Europe. It is about 50 miles wide and 3,000 feet deep. Its rate of flow, measured in volume per second, is about 1,000 times greater than the Mississippi River. Many ocean vessels ‘ride’ this current in order to save valuable shipping time” (Wayne Jackson, Christian Courier, Psalm 8:8 – The Paths of the Sea).

Matthew Fountaine Maury is today regarded as “The Father of Modern Oceanography.” His home state of Virginia honored him with a plaque in 1927. It is in Goshen Pass. It mentions Psalm 8; Psalm 107:3, 23-24; and Ecclesiastes 1:8 as his inspiration. There is a statue to him in Richmond, Virginia. The base of the statue reads “Pathfinder of the Seas.” Next to the seated Maury is a Bible.

Critics have pointed out that the statue does not mention Psalm 8. They do this because some Christian apologists have said that it does. However, such is due to confusing the plaque in Goshen Pass with the statue.

4. “Have you entered into the springs of the sea? Or have you walked in the recesses of the deep?” (Job 38:16 NASB). Jehovah asked these (and other) questions of Job. They were designed to

humble him by pointing out how much he did not know and could not control. God is the wise Creator and Sustainer of the Universe.

“Job have you walked the ocean floor?” The Challenger exploration (1873-1876) was the first known scientific exploration of the ocean floor. “Job have you found the sub-marine springs which issue from the ocean floor?” The Roman geographer Strabo (63B.C. – 21 A.D.) made the earliest known secular reference to these springs (Bert Thompson, *A Study Course in Christian Evidence*, p. 128). “Job have you found the recesses of the ocean floor”? “For a long time man considered the seashore nothing more than a shallow sandy extension from one continent to another” (ibid). Today, we know that there are sub-marine canyons which dwarf the Grand Canyon. One is almost seven miles deep.

5. “All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; to the place from which the rivers come, there they return again” (Ecclesiastes 1:7). “If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth” (Ecclesiastes 11:3a). “He causes the vapor to ascend from the ends of the earth; He makes lightening for the rain” (Psalm 135:7). “He calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out on the face of the earth” (Amos 9:6). One scientific article says, “The idea of a global hydrologic cycle dates back at least 3,000 years when early Greek philosophers including Thales, Anaxagoras, Herodotus, Hippocrates, Plato, and Aristotle conceptualized the basic ideas governing the process. Many initial ideas established by the Greeks about the hydrologic cycle were reasonable. However, many of the initial mechanisms concerning the routes by which water returned from the sea and entered the rivers were devoid of as much logic” (ecoearth.org). Some of their ideas were wrong. Scientific understanding of the water cycle came in the 17th century through the work of Pierre Perault and Edme Marriotte.

Astronomy

1. “He stretches out the north over empty space; He hangs the earth on nothing” (Job 26:7). Ancient cultures have had various ideas about what upholds this earth. In ancient Greece it was Atlas. In other cultures it was elephant, or turtles, or a whale. The Bible does not make such mistakes.
2. “Which is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoices like a strong man to run its race. Its rising is from one end of heaven, and its circuit to the other end; and there is nothing hidden from its heat” (Psalm 19:5-6). The sun is the subject under consideration.

Critics of the Bible have in the past claimed the Bible is in error here. It was thought that while the earth traveled through space around the sun, the sun stood still.

Some defenders of the Bible in more recent times have pointed out that the sun does not stand still. “It is estimated to be moving through space at about 600,000 miles per hour, in an orbit so large it would take an estimated 220,000,000 years just to complete one orbit” (Bert Thompson, *A Study Course in Christian Evidences*, p. 133).

However, I do not believe that this is teaching that the sun orbits through space. The sun’s circuit is not literally from one end of the universe to the other. The universe is huge. This is “phenomenal language” of how things appear from an earthly perspective. We use such language when we speak of the sun. I do not see this as one passage of scientific foreknowledge.

3. “Where is the way to the dwelling of light? And darkness, where is its place?” (Job 38:19). The word “way” refers to a road on which one travels (cf. Genesis 16:7). The word “place” refers to where something resides (cf. Genesis 1:9; 28:11). Could this be saying that light moves and darkness does not? “Until the seventeenth century, it was believed that light was transmitted instantaneously. Then, Isaac Newton suggested that light was composed of small particples which travel in a straight line. Christiaan Huygens proposed the wave theory of light. Olaus Romer measured the velocity of light as evidenced by its delay as it traveled through space (ibid, p. 133).

Physics

1. “Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished” (Genesis 2:1). Bert Thompson commented, “Moses chose the Hebrew past definite tense for the verb ‘finished,’ indicating an action completed in the past, without continuing action in the future” (ibid, p. 132). This is the First Law of Thermodynamics. Today neither matter nor energy is being created or destroyed. The Bible agrees with this. Yet, until relatively recently many believed in spontaneous generation. Men such as William Harvey (1578-1657), Francis Bacon (1561-1626), Rene Descartes (1596-1650), and Aristotle 384 B.C. – 322 B.C.).
2. “You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you will endure; Yes, they will grow old like a garment...” (Psalm 102:25-26; Hebrews 1:10-11). “...The earth will grow old like a garment...” (Isaiah 51:6). This is consistent with the Second Law of Thermodynamics. “Everything is wearing out. Energy is becoming less available for work. Eventually then (theoretically speaking) the universe, left to itself, will experience a ‘heat death’ where no more energy is available for use” (Bert Thompson, In Defense of the Bible’s Inspiration, p. 51). Again, the Bible is accurate.

Engineering

“The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits” (Genesis 6:15). This is a ratio of 30 to 5 to 3. “These dimensions are the perfect ratio for a huge boat built for seaworthiness and not for speed” (Kyle Butt, Noah’s Ark – A Flawless Floater, Apologetics Press). “Currently docked near Pier 39 in San Francisco is the S.S. Jeremiah O’Brien – the last of the fleet of ships known as Liberty Ships. These boats were specifically built to carry massive loads through rough seas. However, when I called a retired Navy Sailor to discuss this particular ship, he told me that the entire fleet was built to the exact dimensions of Noah’s ark” (Brad Harrub, Convicted, p. 261).

Biology/Medicine/Health

1. “And God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth’; and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind...” (Genesis 1:11-12). “So God created great sea creatures, and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind...” (Genesis 1:21). “Then God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth the living creatures according to its kind: Cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind’; and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind... (Genesis 1:24-25). Things reproduce after their kind, and only after their kind. A tomato plant does not produce lamb. One kind of animal does not become another kind of plant. Science has only observed this despite the theory of evolution.
2. “All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds” (1 Corinthians 15:39). It is obvious that these kinds of flesh look differently. However, “the genetic and protein structures of various animals and man are very different from one another” (creationmoments.com). A police lab can certainly tell the difference.
3. “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed...” (Genesis 3:15). “And Judah said to Onan, go in unto thy brother’s wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother. And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother’s wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest he should give seed to his brother” (Genesis 38:8-9 KJV). Watch that both the male and the female are said to have seed. “Such however, was not believed in Moses day. Ancient writers believed that only the male possessed the seed of life, and that the female was nothing more than a glorified incubator! One writer (Democritus,

an ancient Greek) even suggested that male semen could be deposited in warm mud, and the result would be essentially the same as depositing it in the human female. Today we know it takes 23 chromosomes found in the female ovum (“seed”), plus 23 chromosomes found in the male sperm (“seed”) to produce a normal human” (Bert Thompson, *A Study Course in Christian Evidences*, p. 130-131).

4. “He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child...” Genesis 17:12). Have you ever wondered why the eighth day? Why not the third? Or the tenth? The answer is that in a pre-modern medicine age, this was the optimal time for minor surgery on a newborn male child. The things are needful for efficient blood-clotting which came together perfectly on the eighth day. (a) Vitamin K, which was identified and named in the year 1935 by Henrik Dam, is needful blood-clotting element. It is produced in the intestinal tract. It “is not formed in the normal amount until the fifth to the seventh day of life” (S.I. McMillen, *None of These Diseases*, p. 20). (b) Prothrombin, a protein is also a needful blood-clotting element. Vitamin K is responsible for the production of prothrombin by the liver. “On the third day of a baby’s life the available prothrombin is only thirty percent of normal. Any surgical operation performed on a baby during that time would be predisposed to serious hemorrhage... Prothrombin skyrockets on the eighth day to a level even better than normal – 110 percent. It then levels out to one hundred percent. It appears that an eight-day-old baby has more available prothrombin than on any other day in life. Thus one observes that from a consideration of vitamin K and prothrombin their determinations the perfect day to perform a circumcision is the eighth day” (ibid, p. 21). Are we supposed to believe that this was just a lucky guess?

Lessons from History

1. The Old Testament prohibited eating pork (Leviticus 11:7). Pigs are scavengers. They will eat almost anything. They can carry parasites such as *Trichinella Spiralis*, *Taenia Solium*, and *Echinococcus Granulosus*. These parasites can cause many problems. “Pigs can provide safe meat, if they are cleanly fed and if the muscle tissue is well cooked. But these conditions did not prevail in ancient times” (Bert Thompson, *Prohibition on Pigs*, Apologetics Press). Following the Bible allowed the Israelites to avoid many diseases others experienced.
2. The Old Testament taught the principle of the quarantine (Leviticus 13:46). Europe in the Middle Ages had several epidemics of leprosy. “What did the physicians offer to stop the ever-increasing ravages of leprosy? Some taught that it was ‘brought on by eating hot food, pepper, garlic, and the meat of diseased hogs.’ Other physicians said it was caused by malign conjunction of the planets. Naturally, their suggestions for prevention were utterly worthless... what brought the major plagues of the Dark Ages under control? Leadership was taken by the church, as the physicians had nothing to offer. The church took as its guiding principle the concept of contagion as embodied in the Old Testament. As soon as the European nations saw the application of scriptural quarantine brought leprosy under control, they applied the same principle against the Black Death. The results were equally spectacular, and millions of lives were saved” (S.I. McMillen, *None of These Diseases*, pp. 11-12).
3. The Bible teaches that life is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11-14). We know this is correct. Red blood cells carry the oxygen which we need to live. However, George Washington was bled of 5 pints of blood in 1799. He died. Whether the bleeding caused the death or not is debated; but it certainly did not help. The theory for a couple of thousand years was that disease was caused by the imbalance of four humors (blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm). It was thought that George Washington had too much blood. The Bible does not make such mistakes.
4. The Old Testament teaches public sanitation (Deuteronomy 23:12-13). Cities in the 19th century, and before, had serious sanitation problems. “It was the rule for excrement to be dumped into

the streets which were unpaved and filthy. Powerful stench gripped villages and cities. It was a heyday for flies as they bred in the filth and spread intestinal diseases that killed millions” (S.I. McMillen, *None of These Diseases*, p. 13). Epidemics of typhoid, cholera, and dysentery were common. London suffered a cholera epidemic in 1846 and 1847. It affected the poor more than the rich. Edwin Chadwick of the Board of Health wanted to know why. “The poor lived in basements... The city of London had a serious problem with sewage disposal. Its drainage system was inadequate... The streets were filled with raw sewage that people dumped indiscriminately from the second and third story windows. When rain fell in sufficient quantities to run through the streets, the then-tainted water naturally settled in the lowest places it could find – basements... Chadwick identified the problem and implemented a new drainage system that eventually saved lives...” (Kyle Butt, *Sewage Problems*, Apologetics Press). These lives which were lost to Cholera would not have been lost if man had followed the Bible’s teaching on public sanitation.

5. The Old Testament teaches personal hygiene (Numbers 19:11-12, 14-15, 16-19). In the year 1847, Ignaz Semmelweis, an Austrian physician, was puzzled. 18% of the women who delivered a baby in the hospital ward he directed died. The mortality rate in hospitals across Europe had similar high rates. However, only 3% of women died in delivery when using a midwife. Semmelweis wanted an answer. “As he contemplated... he watched young medical students perform their routine tasks. Each day the students would perform autopsies on the dead mothers. Then, they would rinse their hands in a bowl of bloody water, wipe them off on a common, shared towel, and immediately begin internal examinations of still-living women... They had never seen a germ much less been able to predict its destructive potential... Semmelweis ordered that everyone in his ward was to thoroughly washed his or her hands in a chlorine solution after every examination. In three months, the death rate fell from 18% to 1% (Kyle Butt, *Don’t Touch Dead Bodies!*, Apologetics Press). The Old Testament counted those who had touched dead bodies unclean for seven days. He was repeatedly and thoroughly washed. The water was mixed with ashes (used in producing lye soap) and hyssop (which contains the antiseptic thymol). How much misery could man save himself, if he would consider what the Bible says?
6. The Old Testament teaches against overworking the land (Leviticus 25:3-5). Consider the Dust Bowl. “The late 1920’s had seen a huge demand for wheat, and many farmers in Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico and Kansas planted crops year after year... Nutrients and bacteria (specifically, nitrogen-fixing bacteria)... had been removed from the land as a result of the never-ending sowing and reaping cycles... the grasses that normally grew in the fields to protect the land from erosion were unable to do so. When matters were complicated by a severe drought and dangerous windstorms in the region the ground was too weak, and too feeble to sustain either itself or its crop. Huge gusts of fifty mile-per-hour winds moved through the area, causing massive dust storms that filled houses, destroyed valuable farm equipment, and swept away millions of tons of topsoil” (Kyle Butt, *Let the Land Rest*, Apologetics Press).

Conclusion

The evidence cries out this is a book from God. Moreover, the Bible’s accuracy in details which are secondary ought to cause us to ponder seriously the primary purposes of the book. It reveals God. It tells man how to live. It tells man how to overcome sin. It tells man how to have eternal fellowship with God. “O earth, earth, earth, Hear the word of the LORD!” (Jeremiah 22:29).

God's Word, by History

Christopher Hill



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Chris has worked with Camp Shiloh, a Christian camp for children in New York, from 1987-2001, and served on the board of directors from 1998 - 2001. He also worked with the church of Christ in Honesdale, PA from 1997-2001. At the present time, Chris works with the Luther Community Service Center and serves on the Board of Directors starting in 2006; and he now works with the church of Christ in Luther, OK.

He has preached in gospel meetings and lectureships at Oklahoma Christian University and the "Annual Oklahoma City Lecture" at the Barnes church of Christ. This is Chris' second time to speak on our lectureship.

Chris traveled to the Philippines in 2012 and 2013 to assist missionaries there with preaching and conducting auto repair seminars at the Mactan church of Christ and at Camp Arapal in Cebu.

Have you ever really thought about the Bible as being God breathed? The Bible is a book made up of 66 books written by 40 authors over a span of 1500 years. Yet, the Bible tells one basic story- a story that begins with the creation and ends with eternity. Every part of the Bible must be understood as a part of this one great story. The Bible declares itself to be inspired by God. The Apostle Paul writes, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness."¹ In 2 Peter 1:21 in Peter writes, "For no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

There are other books that claim inspiration, but they are very few of them. What about other religious writings? Are they inspired by God too? Obviously, just because a book claims to be inspired God, doesn't mean that it actually is inspired of God. John writes in 1 John 4:1, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world."

Many books that claim inspiration of God fall short when tested. There are contradictions within the writings themselves; the writings contradict known facts of science and they also contradict known facts of history. Not one of them exhibits such amazing qualities as the predictive prophecy and scientific foreknowledge that are found in the Bible. The unity of the Bible and its accurate historical documentation of people, places, customs, and events are without equal in history and bears testimony to the fact that the writers lived in the times and places they wrote about and were guided by the Holy Spirit in their writing.

If the Bible is really the Word of God, we should be able to compare its historical record with known facts of history and archeology. God does not make mistakes concerning history because He knows history before it even happens. Over the years there have been many criticisms leveled against the Bible

1 2 Timothy 3:16, NASB. All subsequent Scripture quotations are taken from the New American Standard Version unless otherwise stated.

concerning its historical accuracy. These criticisms are usually based on a lack of evidence from outside sources to confirm the Biblical record, not on contrary information or evidence. So, is the Bible historically accurate in the information and discoveries that can be verified? Over the past 250 years, there have been many archeological discoveries that confirm the existence of people, places, events, and customs the Bible mention. The Bible has proven to be accurate and trustworthy and in many instances it is our best and most valuable source for historical information. The Bible continues to be proved right by each new archeological discovery.

The Hittites

In the Old Testament, a group of people called the “Hittites” are mentioned fourty-seven times. Those critical of the Bible laughed at the mention of the Hittite people since there was no evidence in history or archaeology that could corroborate the Hittite peoples existence. The Bible states that Bathsheba’s husband was Uriah the Hittite, whom King David had killed to cover up his adulterous act.² The Hittite people are first referred to in Scripture in the history of Abraham. When God promises to multiply Abraham’s decedents and give his offspring land as an inheritance, part of the land included in the promise is the land of the Hittites. Genesis 15:18-20 reads, “On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim.”

When Abraham’s wife dies, he buys a field and the cave of Machpelah from Ephron the Hittite as a place to bury his wife.³ Esau takes his first two wives from the Hittite people. Genesis 26:34 reads, “When Esau was forty years old he married Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite.” The Genesis account makes it a point to let us know that these two women were a source of grief to his parents Isaac and Rebeka.⁴ The Hittites are listed as among those who live in the Promised Land⁵ and are listed as one of the nations that the Israelites need to conquer when entering and taking possession of the Promised Land.⁶ Mention is made of “Ahimelech the Hittite” in 1 Samuel 26:6. The Hebrew merchants exported horses from Egypt not only for the kings of Israel, but also for the Hittites. There is a description of this in 1 Kings 10:29; “A chariot was imported from Egypt for 600 *shekels* of silver, and a horse for 150; and by the same means they exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and to the kings of the Arameans.”

The Old Testament frequently mentions the Hittites as a very real group of people, but the Hittites were once thought to be a mythical people. Some even went as far to say that the Bible is not accurate about the existence of the Hittites since there is no evidence in history or archaeology that corroborates what the Bible says about the existence of such a people. For this reason, some people discredited the Biblical record and insisted that the Bible must be inaccurate about other things too. However, in the year 1876 archaeologist Hugo Winckler, visited a city in Turkey named Boghaz-Köy. Upon excavating portions of the city, he discovers five temples, many sculptures, a castle and many other artifacts. He also discovers a large room that contains over 10,000 clay tablets. As the tablets were deciphered, it became clear that Hugo Winckler’s discovery confirmed the existence of the Hittite people. The sight at Boghaz-Köy was



Figure 1. Istanbul Archaeological Museum - Oriental pavilion. The tablet containing the Qadesh treaty between the Hittites and the Egyptians (1269 BC.) - Picture by: Giovanni Dall’Orto, May 28 2006.

² 2 Samuel 11:3

³ Genesis 23:3-18

⁴ Genesis 26:35

⁵ Exodus 23:28

⁶ Joshua 11:3-4

once the Hittite capital city, Hattusha.⁷ One particular interesting discovery is that of a treaty between the Egyptians and the Hittites. After several years of battles with both sides encountering heavy losses, a treaty was signed with the terms of peace. It is the oldest written treaty to survive to-date (though not the oldest known treaty).⁸ Archeological evidence proves the historical accuracy of the Bible.

Belshazzar King of Babylon

Belshazzar, king of Babylon, named in Daniel 5 is a King that many historical experts had their doubts about. According to recorded history outside of the Biblical text, the last king of Babylon is “Nabonidus.”

The book of Daniel tells the story of a King called “Belshazzar” who is the last king of Babylon. King Belshazzar is very disrespectful of God and because of his misuse of holy items taken from the temple in Israel, God sends him a message about his future. The story is told in Daniel 5:1-4 reads,

Belshazzar the king held a great feast for a thousand of his nobles, and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand. When Belshazzar tasted the wine, he gave orders to bring the gold and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God which was in Jerusalem; and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them. They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.

During the banquet the fingers of a man’s hand appears and writes on a wall. The king summons all wise men in the kingdom to interpret the writing. He promises great things to the man who can read what the finger has written. The Bible declares that no one can read the writing except God’s faithful and wise servant Daniel. One thing in particular that King Belshazzar promises is that he will give the one who can read the inscription, the authority of third highest ruler in the kingdom.

Tablets were discovered showing that King Belshazzar was Nabonidus’ son who served as joint ruler in Babylon. King Belshazzar could only offer to make Daniel third highest ruler in the kingdom for reading the inscription on the wall since that was the highest available position. Bryant Wood, PhD of Associates for Biblical Research writes, “Here we see the ‘eye-witness’ nature of the Biblical record, as is so often brought out by the discoveries of archaeology.”⁹

Cyrus the Great

Cyrus the Great, king of Persia, is mentioned twenty-two times in the Old Testament. He rules Persia during the time when many of Judah’s citizens are in Babylonian captivity after being defeated and captured by the powerful nation of Babylon. According to the Bible there are three deportations of the Jews to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. II Kings 24:14 states, “Then he led away into exile all Jerusalem and all the captains and all the mighty men of valor, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths. None remained except the poorest people of the land.” Among those who



Figure 2. British Museum, The Nabonidus (Father of Belshazzar) Cylinder of Sippar (copy) Picture by Jona Lendering, 2007.



Figure 3. British Museum, Cyrus Cylinder (538-539 B.C.) discovered by Hormuzd Rassam in March 1879.

7 Price, Randall (1997), *The Stones Cry Out* (Eugene OR: Harvest House), Pg 83.

8 Fitzgerald, Stephanie (2008), *Ramses II: Egyptian Pharaoh, Warrior, and Builder*, (Compass Point Books), pg 64

9 Wood, Bryant. “In what ways have the discoveries of archaeology verified the reliability of the Bible?” christiananswers.net. <http://www.christiananswers.net/q-abr/abr-a008.html> (accessed December 27, 2014).

were deported from Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah. We might know them better as Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.¹⁰ Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon deports the most important, and well trained, citizens of Judah to Babylon. Several years later from 559-530 B.C., Cyrus rules the Persian Empire. When Cyrus, leader of the Meds and Persians overthrows the Babylonian government in 539 B.C., he inherits all the people who were taken captive during Babylon invasions. Cyrus treats the all former Babylonian captives, including the Jewish captives, very well. In Ezra 1:1-2 we read this about Cyrus: “Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also *put it* in writing, saying: “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, ‘The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.’” Josephus, a well known Jewish historian who was born a few years after Jesus’ resurrection, states that Cyrus knew of the prophecies of Isaiah recorded in Isaiah 44:26-45:7. Isaiah, writes of this event more than 150 years before it comes to pass. In his writing, he calls the Persian king, Cyrus, by name, and announces his role in releasing the Hebrews from captivity and assisting in the rebuilding of the Jewish temple.¹¹ Daniel is still living in the early years of Cyrus’ reign,¹² and he may have been introduced the Persian commander to Isaiah’s testimony.

During excavations at Babylon from 1879-1882, archaeologist Hormuzd Rassam discovers a ten inch, clay, barrel-shaped cylinder that contains an inscription from Cyrus. It is on display in the British Museum. The cylinder reports the king’s policy regarding captives: “I [Cyrus] gathered all their [former] inhabitants and returned [to them] their habitations.”¹³ As noted scholar Jack Finegan observed: “The spirit of Cyrus’s decree of release which is quoted in the Old Testament¹⁴ is confirmed by the Cyrus cylinder...”¹⁵ The discovery of Cyrus’ cylinder shows that the information we find in the Bible is accurate.

Darius-I

Darius I is king of the Persian Empire from 522-486 B.C. In Ezra 6:1-12, King Darius decrees that the Jewish people renew their efforts in the rebuilding of the Temple which had been discontinued for some 10 years. The rebuilding begins under King Cyrus of Persia, but had stalled. Darius is mentioned in the books of Haggai, Zechariah, Ezra, Nehemiah and Daniel. His is the first of three monumental tombs cut into a cliff near the Persian capital of Persepolis, Iran. The Bible’s story of Darius is accurate.



Figure 4. View of Tomb of Darius the Great in Naqsh-e Rostam. Picture by ینایواک شفر د, August 30 2007.

King Sargon of Assyria

It was once claimed there was no Assyrian king named “Sargon” as recorded in Isaiah 20:1, because this name was not known in any other record. Isaiah 20:1 describes the defeat of a Philistine city called “Ashdod” at the hand the Assyrian king Sargon. The scripture simply reads, “In the year that the commander came to Ashdod, when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him and he fought against Ashdod and captured it.” John Argubright writes in his book, *Bible Believers Archeology Volume 2: The Search for Truth* that “This posed a problem to archeologists back in the earliest days of their field study because an obelisk stone with all the names of the Assyrian kings that had ruled the kingdom was uncovered made no mention of Sargon. On its discovery the University of Chicago made a bold statement that they had found

¹⁰ Daniel 1:3

¹¹ Josephus, Flavius (1957), *The Life and Works of Flavius Josephus*, transl. William Whitson (Philadelphia, PA: John C. Winston). (XII.1.2).

¹² Daniel 10:1

¹³ Pritchard, James B. (1958), *The Ancient Near East* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 1:208.

¹⁴ II Chronicles 36:23; Ezra 1:2-4

¹⁵ Finegan, 191

a glaring contradiction in the Bible. They assumed the Scripture was in error since Sargon's name wasn't found engraved on this stone."¹ "In 1843, Paul Emile Botta acting on information he had received about



Figure 5. Louvre Museum, Lamassu (human headed winged bull) relief from King Sargon's Palace in Iraq. Photo by Marie-Lan Nguyen 2005

the small village of Khorsabad, Iraq, which had "sculptured stones." Botta began to find them as soon as he started digging his first trench. Botta and 300 workers spent two years excavating the site. Eventually he uncovers a huge palace of over 100 rooms. Archeologists find a royal palace that has engravings on the walls throughout many parts of it.² Bricks lining the walls are engraved with the name "Sargon." When Sargon's palace is discovered in Khorsabad, Iraq, the exact event in history described in Isaiah 20 is found recorded on the palace walls. It also records the fall of the Northern ten tribes of Israel. On one of the walls is inscribed, "At the beginning of my rule... I set siege to and conquered Samaria... I carried away into captivity 27,290 persons who lived there."³ The Bible describes this exact event in II Kings 17:6-7: "In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and carried Israel away into exile to Assyria, and settled them in Halah and Habor, on the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. Now *this* came about because the sons of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God." The accuracy of the Bible's account of these events is confirmed by archeology.

Sennacherib's Prism

A six-sided hexagonal clay prism, known as the Taylor Prism, was discovered among the ruins of Nineveh, the ancient capital of the Assyrian Empire in 1830. It is currently in the British Museum. It contains the chronicles of Sennacherib king of Assyria, the king who besieged Jerusalem in 701 BC during the reign of King Hezekiah. On the prism Sennacherib boasts that he shut up "Hezekiah the Judahite" within Jerusalem his own royal city "like a caged bird." The Bible tells of this event long before this prism is discovered. The Assyrians are a very brutal people who are the most powerful and feared kingdom of the world at the time they lay siege to Jerusalem. After the 10 northern tribes of Israel fell to Assyria, Judah is forced to pay an annual tribute to the powerful empire of Assyria or risk being overrun by their armies as well. Hezekiah, being a Godly man, initiates extensive religious changes, including the breaking of religious idols and destruction of the high places where idols are worshipped. He re-takes Philistine occupied lands in the Negev desert, and forms alliances with Ashkelon and Egypt. Judah then refuses to pay Assyria more tribute.

In response, Sennacherib goes after the anti-Assyrian coalition defeating Egypt and Ashkelon and lays siege to Lachish, a well defended and fortified city in Judah. Lachish is no match for the well armed Assyrians. While under siege, Hezekiah quickly sends a very costly tribute from Jerusalem, including stripping off the gold from the Temple doors, in exchange for the Assyrians to withdraw, but it doesn't work. After Lachish falls, the Assyrian armies continue their march to Jerusalem and lay siege to it as well. Sennacherib declares that its allies can't save them or their god. He even states that life as Assyrian slaves could be considered a good thing and that is certainly better than death if they do not surrender.



Figure 6. British Museum, the Taylor Prism from the Neo-Assyrian empire tells the story of king Sennacherib's third campaign and includes descriptions of his conquests in Judah. Picture by David Castor, April 2009.

- 1 Argubright, John. (2013), *Bible Believer's Archeology – Volume 2: The Search for Truth* (Google eBooks), 74.
- 2 Murray, Tim, (2007), *Milestones in Archaeology: A Chronological Encyclopedia* (Google eBook), 193-194.
- 3 Skousen, Cleon W, (1984) *Isaiah Speaks to Modern Times*. (Google eBook) chapter 10.

The information on the prism is accurate, yet incomplete. The information on the prism is written in such a way to make Sennacherib and the Assyrian armies look like the ultimate victors over Jerusalem. On the prism, Sennacherib boasts that he shut up “Hezekiah the Judahite” within Jerusalem his own royal city “like a caged bird,” but what the prism doesn’t record is also very telling and gives even more confirmation that the Bible is historically accurate. Sennacherib never claims to conquer Jerusalem, only to have surrounded it. Sennacherib is one of the most powerful leaders in the history of the world. He inherited the empire from his father Sargon. More than 185,000 well trained and armed Assyrian soldiers surrounded the city. This army appears to be unstoppable, so why doesn’t the prism claim he conquered it?

In 1 Kings 18:13-19:37 we learn that God miraculously intervenes and keeps Jerusalem from falling to Assyria. So the information Sennacherib leaves on the Prism is accurate, but not as complete as the record from the Bible. He did shut Hezekiah in Jerusalem like a “Bird in a cage” by surrounding the city, but he is never able to conquer it because God intervenes by sending an angel to kill 185,000 Assyrian troops in one night. The Taylor prism confirms the Bible as totally accurate and shows that the Bible gives us a more complete understanding of this event than the account written on the prism.

In 1845-1847, Henry Austen Layard discovers the Royal Palace of Sennacherib and many other archaeological artifacts. The palace at Nineveh was decorated with huge wall panels of stone depicting the siege of Lachish, which occurred just before the armies of Sennacherib went to Jerusalem. Layard is easily able to identify the story depicted on the reliefs because he is so well acquainted with the Biblical record of this event. In commenting on one of the reliefs discovered showing the fall of Lachish he says,

Here, therefore, was the actual picture of the taking of Lachish, the city as we know from the Bible, besieged by Sennacherib, when he sent his generals to demand tribute of Hezekiah, and which he had captured before their return; evidence of the most remarkable character to confirm the interpretation of the inscriptions, and to identify the king who caused them to be engraved with the Sennacherib of Scripture. This highly interesting series of bas-reliefs contained, moreover, an undoubted representation of a king, a city, and a people, with whose names we are acquainted, and of an event described in Holy Writ.⁴

These reliefs can be seen today at the Lachish Gallery in the British Museum. The Bible is proven right again.

Ossuary of Caiaphas the High Priest

Caiaphas was high priest for 18 years, A.D. 18-36. He most likely gained the position by marrying the daughter of Annas, head of a powerful high-priestly family.⁵ Caiaphas is remembered as the leader of the conspiracy to crucify Jesus.

At a meeting of the religious leaders, Caiaphas says, “It is better for you that one man die for the people than the whole nation perish.”⁶ He refers to the possible intervention of the Roman authorities, if Jesus’ teaching should cause an uprising. His words are prophetic in that Jesus does die for the people as a sacrifice for sin. After Jesus is arrested, He is taken to Caiaphas’ house and detained overnight. The guards mock and beat Him.⁷ In the morning He is interrogated and further beaten. Caiaphas asks Him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?” “I am,” Jesus replied.⁸ Caiaphas then transfers Jesus over to Pilate to be tried. Following Jesus’ crucifixion, Caiaphas persecutes the followers of Jesus. He



Figure 7. The Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Ossuary of the high priest, Joseph Caiaphas, was found in Jerusalem in 1990. Picture by Deror Avi, October 16, 2012

⁴ Austen Henry Layard, *Discoveries Among the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*, 1853

⁵ John 18:13

⁶ John 11:50

⁷ Luke 22:63-65

⁸ Mark 14:61-61

brings the apostles before the religious leaders and says to them, “We gave you strict orders not to teach in this Name. Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man’s blood.” Peter and the other apostles reply, “We must obey God rather than men.”⁹

The Caiaphas family tomb was accidentally discovered by workers constructing a road in a park just south of the Old City of Jerusalem. When archaeologists examined the tomb, they found 12 limestone bone boxes containing the remains of 63 individuals. The most beautifully decorated of the boxes is inscribed with the name “Joseph son of (or, of the family of) Caiaphas.” That is the full name of the high priest who arrested Jesus, as documented by Josephus.¹⁰

Ebla Archive

Byrant Wood, PhD of Associates for Biblical Research writes, “The discovery of the Ebla archive in northern Syria in the 1970s has shown the Biblical writings concerning the Patriarchs to be viable. Documents written on clay tablets from around 2300 B.C. demonstrate that personal names and places in the Patriarchal accounts are genuine. The name ‘Canaan’ was in use in Ebla, a name critics once said was not used at that time and was used incorrectly in the early chapters of the Bible. The Hebrew word ‘tehom’ (‘the deep’) in Genesis 1:2 was said to be a late word demonstrating the late writing of the creation story. ‘Tehom’ was part of the vocabulary at Ebla, in use some 800 years before Moses.”¹¹

Not only is the historical information of the Bible proved to be correct, the words used in the Bible are used in the correct way and in the correct time in history. Once again the Bible is proven right by history and archeology.



Figure 8. A Clay Tablet found in Elba, Syria. Today the Syrian Museums of Aleppo, Damascus, and Idlib. Picture from Atlastours.net

Conclusion

The Bible is a holy book made up of sixty-six books written by forty authors over a span of fifteen hundred years. The Bible tells one basic story- a story that begins with the creation and ends in eternity. Every part of the Bible should be understood as a part of this one great story. The Bible declares itself to be inspired by God and archaeological and historical evidence demonstrates that claim to be absolutely true.

This is important for us to know because the Bible is our primary source for most of what we know about Jesus the Christ and our salvation through Him. James writes in James 1:21 that the word of God should be accepted because it has the power to improve our lives and save our souls. He writes, “...putting aside all filthiness and **all** that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.” The Bible instructs us on how we should live our lives to the glory of God. History and archeology confirms that the Bible can be trusted, so let’s trust it to be our guide.

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9 Acts 5:28-29

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God's Word, by Harmony

Chris Stinnett



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He started preaching full time in 1987 after graduation from Oklahoma Christian University. He started preaching, working with the church of Christ in Seminole, OK. In July, 1998. Chris has preached in the following states: Missouri, Michigan, and Oklahoma and has preached in meetings in Texas and Arkansas. This is his third time to speak on the "Annual Oklahoma City Lectures."

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The Holy Word of God has been attacked by believers and unbelievers ever since it was delivered to humanity. God knew that His word would be challenged and He provided tests so that people could know whether a revelation was from Him or was the invention of a corrupt person (Deut. 13:1-5; 18:22; Jeremiah 23:14-22, for example). Uninformed or rebellious people have seized upon what they imagine to be contradictions—impossibly contrary statements—in order to disparage the Scriptures and avoid the plain requirements of God.

Each year, coinciding with major religious seasons like Christmas and, especially, Easter observances, we hear skeptical pronouncements and "shocking new revelations!" that are deliberately offered to incite doubt in religiously minded people. In the past, we have heard scandalous claims about Jesus being married, laughable claims about David being a homosexual, and anachronistic works being touted as "lost books of the Bible" or "suppressed Scriptures," as if it were possible to hide such works when so many seek to denigrate the word of God. Yet a favorite, inexhaustible font of skepticism is the claim that there are contradictions within the Holy Scriptures.

It is easy to understand the reason for the perennial hope that somehow the Scriptures are contradictory. Those who seek contradictions actually seek to reassure themselves that the demands of Scripture can be set aside with safety. No book that held conflicts within its writings could also claim inspiration and, therefore, authority over men's lives. It is the clear desire to avoid the implications of Holy Scripture that drives the frothing scramble to identify somewhere, somehow, complete paradoxes between passages, each claiming to be the word of God. If such skeptics were more honest, they would have to agree with the worldly Mark Twain, who famously said, "It's not the things in the Bible that I don't understand that bother me; it's the things I understand all too well!"

What lends aid and comfort to these denials is the fact that, as C. S. Lewis pointed out, the Bible is a "grown-up book." There are obviously difficult passages in the Bible, but we must realize that difficulty is not the same as contradiction. For someone to say, "I don't know the answer," is not the same as saying, "Nobody knows or can know the answer to this." And to say, "This confuses me," is not the same as saying, "This verse conflicts with another passage." There is a multitude of reasons why something may appear to be a contradiction.

Why does this look like a contradiction?

In 1950, George DeHoff, of Freed-Hardeman College in Tennessee, wrote *Alleged Bible Contradictions Explained*. This was likely the first full-length treatment of this subject since 1875 when John Haley wrote a classic work on the subject. Since 1950, several other works have been produced, some quite recently. Still, DeHoff's book is very well done and points out that dozens of the so-called contradictions are actually the result of reader shortcomings. Several reader shortcomings that are listed include:

- A simple misinterpretation of Scripture.

It is deceptively easy for us to read current ideas back into ancient words and fail to account for the thoughts of the writers. The science and art of Biblical interpretation is labeled, "hermeneutics," and requires some rudimentary training in order to apply effectively the techniques necessary to draw out the correct meaning of the passage. For example, it is quite common for puzzled people to contrast Proverbs 26:4 (Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him yourself) with Proverbs 26:5 (Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes) and demand to know how these can be reconciled.

In fact, the answer depends upon knowing the actual function of Biblical proverbs, which are short sayings of general truth that must be applied in a particular instance in order to express God's wisdom. Certainly in some cases, fools should be confronted with their folly; in other cases, it's best to let fools babble on. God's wisdom may be shown in both courses of action—depending on the fool!

- Different authors may express things in different ways.

One of the general rules of Bible study demands that we know who is speaking the words under examination (seven general rules for Bible study will be included later in this paper). In John 1:21, John the Baptist denied being Elijah—he knew very well that he was John. In Matthew 11:14, Jesus flatly declared that John is "the Elijah who was to come." How can both statements be true?

John knew that he was not Elijah, but John, the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth. Jesus knew that he was, indeed, everything that God had intended when He promised the coming of Elijah in Malachi 4:5. Both statements are perfectly true; each speaker had an answer to a different question, so they were expressing things in different ways.

- Different dates may result in different statements.

At the culmination of creation, God described His work as "very good" (Genesis 1:31). Yet a few pages along, God surveyed humanity and rendered a different verdict. "The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain" (Genesis 6:6). How could man be "very good" and then evaluated to be so depraved as to grieve God? The answer is simply that intervening was the fall and banishment from the Garden in chapter three and the great explosion of violence and homicide as related in chapter four. Ten generations had come along and the degeneracy of humanity was in full display.

This helps to explain some of the statements about the commands of God, as well. For instance, Israel was commanded to observe the Sabbath for generations to come (Exodus 31:14-17), even incurring the death penalty on those who violated it. However, with the New Covenant, the Sabbath is no longer a covenant feature, nor are the animal sacrifices at certain days, nor are the uses of special incense or lights, nor separated priests, nor dietary laws. All these things have changed because the covenant has changed and different times have resulted in different requirements from God.

- Different subjects in the authors' minds call for different expressions.

Even though two writers may be inspired, they may choose different reasons for their statements and appear, at first blush, to be in conflict. When Paul wrote to the Roman Christians, he emphasized the need for faith and the salvation that is ours through the grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. When James wrote to the Jewish Christians in what is now Turkey and beyond, he emphasized the need

for a faith that is shown by its activity. The different emphases—one pointing toward faith, the other pointing toward good deeds—have led some to conclude that they contradict each other (notably, the reformer Martin Luther). In fact, there is no contradiction and there is complete harmony. It is obvious that faith in Jesus is critical, and that real faith will issue in appropriate actions. It is worthy of mention that both Paul and James buttress their respective arguments by resorting to the very same example, quoting the very same Scripture: Genesis 15:6 (see Romans 4:3 and James 2:23)! In both cases, they are right. Abraham was justified by his faith, and his faith was a muscular faith!

This helps to account for the differences in the genealogies of Jesus as recorded by Matthew and Luke. Luke's emphasis in Luke 3 is to demonstrate that Jesus is the direct descendant of God, Himself. Matthew's emphasis is to show that Jesus is the lawful heir of Abraham and David—in order to do this, he offers a symmetrical arrangement of three groups of 14 generations, even though in order to do this he must include David and Jeconiah twice and skip some of the Judean kings (notably Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah)! His point is not to create a pedigree, but a clear and memorable line showing God's plan for redemption. The different subjects in view by the two evangelists require different handling.

- Different methods of arrangement may seem contradictory.

In Ezra 4:6-23, a letter is included that flatly could not have been found in the chronological stream. It was addressed to Artaxerxes, who was not king over Persia for at least another 60 years, long after the death of Zerubbabel and his compatriots. Ezra 5 includes correspondence with Darius, who predated Artaxerxes. The arrangement of the letters has nothing to do with chronology, but with subject matter. The letters are located in their proper position to demonstrate that opposition and false charges had dogged the returned exiles again and again. There is no sense in which this can be said to be contradictory except in the mind of the most intractable critic.

Another example of differences in arrangement concerns the order of temptations suffered by Jesus at the hands of Satan. In Matthew 4:1-11, the order is: stones to bread, jump from pinnacle, all kingdoms. In Luke 4:1-13, the order is: stones to bread, all kingdoms, jump from pinnacle. How can they be harmonized? In short, Luke apparently did not intend to present a “blow-by-blow” account. He listed the temptations with the simple connective, “and.” Matthew listed the temptations separated by an adverb, “then,” indicating that these are sequential, one after the other. Both have all three temptations; Matthew gave them in order while Luke gave them in full. They are simply different arrangements of the same information.

- Different methods of computation can present different declarations.

The Gospels all record the crucifixion of Jesus. All of them make time statements about the trial events and the crucifixion, the darkness and the death of Jesus. Mark 15:25 indicates that Jesus was crucified at the third hour; John has Jesus in front of Pilate at the sixth hour (John 19:14). It is a seemingly insignificant discrepancy, but it creates great heartburn for some and a kind of middle-school glee in others, proof positive of irreconcilable error. Some, in an attempt to harmonize the accounts, have postulated that they are using different standards of time, and it is clear that Roman customs overlay Jewish customs in Judea at this time.

Far more likely is a much easier and more “common sense” understanding about the computation of time. First, it must be remembered that time was far vaguer in the ancient world than in our clock-driven digital world. The day was simply broken up into blocks: morning, third hour, sixth hour, ninth hour, twelfth hour (evening). “Sixth hour” could mean “somewhere around the middle of the day.” Likewise, “third hour” could mean anything from early mid-morning to near noon. This wasn't ambiguous to them; it was standard speech. In connection with this, it is appropriate to point out a literary device used by Mark. Early in his gospel account, time is very vague. We read statements like “one day,” “a few days later,” “another time,” and so on. As Jesus approaches Jerusalem in His final week, Mark becomes much more precise about the calendar: “the next day,” “in the

morning,” “the first day of the Feast,” and so on. This has the dramatic effect of slowing and concentrating our attention. On His last day, Mark begins, “very early in the morning,” and proceeds to slice time down to hours: third hour, sixth hour, ninth hour. The dramatic tension builds toward the death of Jesus. With His entombment, we are released from the time constraints somewhat; our next time stamp is after the Sabbath, very early on the first day of the week.

John recorded the final appearance of Jesus before Pilate at “about the sixth hour,” which could mean anything from our 10:30 AM to about 2 PM. Mark recorded Jesus’ crucifixion at “third hour,” which could mean anything from our 9 AM to near noon. If Jesus were in fact condemned before Pilate late morning and immediately crucified, as is likely, both Mark’s “third hour” and John’s “sixth hour” would be recognizably true to the original readers. Only modern minds, accustomed to the strict divisions of minutes and seconds, would find these statements out of synchronization.

- Misunderstandings of history and archaeology lead to charges of error.

In the 1700s, it was very fashionable among theological professors to charge Isaiah with ignorance or fantasy in naming the Assyrian king, “Sargon” in Isaiah 20. A full, chronological list of Assyrian kings had been found and widely circulated. King Sargon was listed as occupying the throne around 2000 BC while Isaiah’s day was about 750 BC. The charges against Isaiah were silenced after 1849, when a French legate named Emile Botha excavated a huge palace complex dating to the 8th century BC and repeatedly bearing the name, “Sargon.” Like many such kings, he wore several names.

In Acts 17:6 and 8, Luke refers to the rulers of the city of Thessalonica as “politarchs.” In decades past, scornful historians derided the historicity of Acts, in part because the title, “politarch” had been used and then discarded much earlier than Paul’s visit, even though it was revived more than a century after his missionary activity. Recent excavations, though, have revealed that the title “politarch” was revived and discarded multiple times in the history of the Macedonian capital, and was, in fact, the precisely correct label for the city officials under discussion during the time of Paul’s visit. (The interested reader should refer to *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* by the renowned A. N. Sherwin-White for a ringing endorsement of Luke’s precision, including this obscure, but pointedly correct, reference.)

- Problems of language may lead to charges of contradiction.

Translation is particularly fraught with peril as it is challenging to render literal equivalence from one language to another, particularly when separated by wide centuries, cultures and locales. Even more baffling than syntactical constructions are idiomatic expressions and euphemisms, many of which simply cannot be translated without generating even more confusion. Add to that a list of synonyms and changes in the writing and pronunciation of language and the problems multiply. These difficulties can sometimes be charged as contradictions when they are, in truth, linguistic problems or idiomatic expressions.

What, for example, is the meaning of “Beersheba”? Is it “well of seven” as related in Genesis 21:31? Or is it “well of vow/oath” as related in Genesis 26:33? Are these labels beyond reconciliation? In truth, the Hebrew “shva” can, with minor vowel variation, mean “oath or vow,” or it can mean “seven.” Either can be a correct derivation of the Hebrew; there is no contradiction at all.

A far more commonly described “contradiction” involves the timing of Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection and His assertion that He would be “three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:40). However, there is no possibility of stuffing three days and three nights into the time from Jesus’ burial late Friday afternoon until His resurrection on pre-dawn Sunday. How can His words be true? The difficulty is resolved in the understanding of the common figure of speech labeled, “synecdoche.” This is a figure of speech in which a part is intended to stand for the whole, or a whole is intended to stand for the part. If the command “all hands on deck” is issued, the result is the assembly of all the sailors, not only their hands. If I invite you to dinner at my house and you ask at what time you should arrive, I might say, “Have your shoes under my table by 7 PM,” but it

is clearly understood that I want you, not only your shoes, in place by that time. Jesus' desire was not to mark off a 72 hour time frame, but to draw out the unmistakable similarity between Himself and Jonah—the only prophet from Galilee, who saved Gentiles, and was out of sight for a time and given up for dead.

There are hundreds more examples of the difficulties of linguistic understanding and our knowledge of the ancient languages continues to expand. More light will continually be shed upon figures of speech, common sayings and accepted proverbs, which remain obscure to us. One day we might even uncover the meaning and use of Urim and Thummim!

- By far the most common source of allegations of contradiction occur from very intentional misrepresentations of Scripture.

The writings of skeptics and the perpetually aggrieved, like John Spong of England, Barbara Thiering of Australia and John Dominic Crossan and Bart Ehrman of the United States, continue to trouble people with their false charges of contradiction and unreliability of the Scriptures. Examination almost always demonstrates that the supposed problems are only the result of fanciful theories and completely impossible ways of reading and interpreting the Bible.

What steps can help me reconcile what looks like a contradiction?

From time to time, we read a statement in the Bible that disturbs us. We think back to an earlier reading, or to a supposition we have maintained, and find ourselves troubled by what seems to be a discrepancy. Investigation may reveal grounds for our unease. How can we reconcile something that seems like a significant variance? The process involves careful reading, careful study, a degree of thought, and possibly some deep research. The goal of all this is to determine whether statements demand contradiction or whether there is a possibility of harmonizing them without doing violence to the text.

1. Careful, close reading may eliminate ideas that seem to clash. As one example, consider two different mentions of the activity of the thieves crucified with Jesus. In Matthew 27:44, we are told they both reviled Jesus as the enemies of the Lord did. In Luke 23:39-43, we read that one attacked Jesus while the other defended him and received forgiveness as a result. At first, these may seem contradictory, but neither account indicates that these conditions persisted through the entire murder. It is very possible that both began by reviling Him while one later repented, possibly from seeing the demeanor of the Lord. It is not difficult to imagine a very plausible condition by which Matthew and Luke both record absolutely accurate words.
2. Careful study may expose a link between two accounts that seem to conflict. Mark 2:25-26 has Jesus saying that “in the days of Abiathar the high priest” (NIV) David ate the consecrated bread of the tabernacle. Other versions render the phrase slightly differently: “when Abiathar was high priest” (ASV, RSV, NRSV); “in the time of Abiathar the high priest” (NASB, ESV). While there is no significant variation in the wording, the supposed contradiction is found in the fact that when David took the bread, Abiathar was, in fact, not the high priest; his father, Ahimelech, was. Only after Ahimelech was murdered by Doeg the Edomite, at Saul’s command, was Abiathar functioning as high priest in the camp of David (the events are recorded in 1 Samuel 21-22). How could Jesus have made such a clear chronological mistake?

Careful study of the text actually does little to help us here—there is a reason that major versions of Mark 2:25-26 sound so similar. Even accounting for the idiosyncrasies of New Testament Greek, the prepositional phrase that could literally be rendered, “upon Abiathar high priest,” makes good sense when rendered, “when Abiathar was high priest.” However, something outside the text itself helps us clear up some confusion. It should be remembered that chapter and verse divisions are late additions to our printed Bibles. Before there were such aids, sections of the Scriptures were simply referenced by a major event or character. When Jesus was challenged by the Sadducees in Mark 12:18-27, He sent them to “the book of Moses, in the account of the bush” (Mark 12:26). It is very likely that when Jesus referred to David’s actions in 1 Samuel 21, He simply mentioned a

major character in that section of Scripture, Abiathar, who served David as priest from the murder of Ahimelech to the time he was deposed by Solomon for supporting Adonijah in his bid to become king of Judah (1 Kings 2:26-27). It was not meant by Jesus to be a precise chronological reference but a pointer toward the correct section of Scripture. In any event, it must be admitted that it was “in the days of Abiathar” that David took the bread, and the label “the high priest” may have been meant to identify which Abiathar was under discussion. Careful Bible study clears up momentary confusion.

3. A certain amount of simple, common-sense thinking can often erase what may seem to be a contradiction. The separate accounts of Judas Iscariot’s end are frequently held up as contradictions. Matthew indicates in a paroxysm of regret Judas threw the money he’d received into the Temple and then went out and hanged himself (Matthew 27:5). Luke, by contrast, says that Judas “fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out” (Acts 1:18 NIV). At first blush, these seem to be different endings of his pitiful life. However, a little thought reveals that these may very well be two different, but utterly complementary, renditions of the same end.

Professional hangmen have repeatedly noted that it is a dicey calculation to determine how much slack to leave in the noose in order to effect a clean break without yanking the victim’s head completely off his body. It is quite possible that Judas, without experience, miscalculated and, instead of a clean hanging, resulted in a messy decapitation or near decapitation. The resultant carcass, bloating in the Judean sun for a few days might very well burst, leaving a gruesome scene for the unwary passerby—who would report it to the priests. Such a scenario could be interpreted as a hanging or a fall that burst the body. Both descriptions could be accurate; no contradiction is necessary.

4. Deep research may be necessary to determine the resolution to passages that seem contradictory. A drawback to performing deep research is that we very frequently do not have access to top-level scholarship or the technical expertise necessary to evaluate fairly the material we discover. We are placed in the position of judging the quality of expert scholarship, and we may not be capable of accurately assessing the specialist’s work. Nevertheless, we may find that writers of commentaries can illuminate avenues of thought that reconcile or harmonize supposed contradictions.

The Holy Scriptures have been attacked for centuries by very intelligent people who are deeply committed to rendering the word irrelevant. Virtually every passage of Scripture has been the subject of intellectual assault. The most shocking charges have been leveled against the word of God. And yet, it remains while the enemies of Scripture continue to make the permanent move to the cemeteries.

It should always be remembered that the Bible was written for ordinary people, and so, it uses ordinary language and ordinary expressions. It rarely seeks for punctilious precision, but rather uses common speech. If ultra-sophisticated critics find it rustically unpalatable, so be it. But that does not mean it is filled with contradictions.

As has often been pointed out, the Bible is a library of 66 books, written by about 40 different writers over about 1400 years, using three languages. In spite of these obstacles, it is a harmonious whole, telling one united story of God’s redemption of humanity. It is free of contradictions and paradoxes. It is meant to be read and understood by normal human beings in order to learn the salvation of God through Jesus Christ. You can trust His word because you can trust the Lord God Almighty.

How To Read The Bible

Whenever you read the Bible, it will be very helpful to follow these seven general rules for Bible study. (Note: these are general rules, so they are not absolutely infallible and all-sufficient. They will guide you safely to the real meaning of the verses something over 90% of the time though!)

1. **Get an overall view of the Scriptures.** We need to place events in their proper position in time. In order to make sense of some events, we need a general idea of the flow of Bible history. Who came first: Isaiah? Or David? Did Solomon build the temple Jesus saw? An overall view will help

us avoid some serious mistakes.

2. **Know what the Bible says.** Look at each word and don't skip the words you don't understand. Some words aren't used very much in conversation, so you may have to look them up in a dictionary to know what they really mean.
3. **Determine who's speaking.** All the Bible writers were inspired by God, but they repeat some things that aren't God's words! For example, Job 8:4 is not God's judgment! And Acts 4:16-17 is not God's will.
4. **Determine to whom the word is spoken.** A commandment or a promise can be for many or for few; for a whole nation or just one person. It can be for a limited time or for all time. It is critical to know to whom the word was spoken. For example: Exodus 20:8 is a commandment to keep the Sabbath, but it was spoken only to the Israelites, not the Gentiles, too!
5. **Study the verses around the passage you're looking at.** You may have to read the paragraph, the chapter or even the whole book to get the whole story. The background of a puzzling passage may clear up the confusion.
6. **Consider other passages that deal with the same subject.** God may not choose to discuss all the details about something in just one passage. He may give us additional information in other passages. Look at other passages dealing with the same or related themes. For example, if you wanted to study speaking in tongues from 1 Corinthians 14, you should look at chapters 12, 13, and 14 along with Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6 and also 1 Timothy 2:12.
7. **Interpret figurative language correctly.** Figures of speech must be seen for what they are and not misread. A few common examples of Biblical figures of speech include:
 - a. Parables (the oldest and most common)—Mt. 13:31-32.
 - b. Simile (a comparison using "like" or "as")—Mt. 23:37.
 - c. Metaphor (a comparison without using "like" or "as")—Mt. 23:15.
 - d. Proverb (a short saying of general truth)—1 Peter 5:5
 - e. Hyperbole (exaggeration for the sake of emphasis)—Mt. 7:3-4.
 - f. Synecdoche (a part standing for the whole, or the whole for the part)—Mt. 12:40.
 - g. Hebrew poetry is a special case of figurative language that requires certain rules.

The interested student may find some of these works of interest. There are many more works that touch on the subject of proper Bible study and the supposed contradictions or paradoxes that are found. Responsible commentaries will almost always treat troublesome passages and explain how they are harmonized. God's word is true and reliable and careful study will eliminate the contradictions claimed by critics.

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Overview of the Bible

Jeff Hendrix



JEFF HENDRIX was born in Los Angeles, CA on May 7, 1961. Jeff enlisted in the Marine Corp in 1978. His family moved to Oklahoma in 1981. He and Gloria were married November 13, 1985 and they have one child, Farrah Shalah. The last 13 years, Jeff has worked for Oklahoma Freight Liner as a Master Journeyman Technician.

Jeff started preaching in 2002 and has done local work with Grand Boulevard church of Christ and has preached at the following congregations: Nicoma Park, Wellston, and the Barnes church. He has preached on the "Annual Oklahoma City Lectures" and this will be his second time to do so.

He has been attending the "Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies" for a number of years and is prepared to graduate at the end of this year.

Jeff has served in the United States Marine Corps.

I. Significant Facts of the Patriarchal Period

A. Name

1. The word "patriarch" means "father, leader, chief, ruler"; therefore this period is literally called the age of "Father-Rule."
2. God revealed His will directly to the heads of the families who in turn taught their children (Heb. 1:1-2). There is no evidence of any written law during this age.

B. Man's Relationship to God

1. As God spoke to the fathers by dreams, angels, or visions, they would instruct their children, thus this is sometimes called an age of family religion (Gen. 18:19).
2. Worship consisted of animal sacrifices offered upon altars (Gen. 8:20; 12:7-8).

C. Duration

1. One must remember the Bible was written for religious ends rather than scientific or chronological purposes.
2. This period begins with Creation, recorded in Gen. 1, and continues until the giving of the Ten Commandments recorded in Exodus 20.

D. Importance of the Patriarchal Period

The Bible record of the Patriarchal Period does not go into detail about every event or person, but what is told answers some important questions which give us a deeper understanding of the rest of the Bible. Let us consider some:

II. Questions Answered By The Significant Events of the Patriarchal Period

A. How Did All Things Begin? (The Creation)

1. All things started with a miracle of God, Genesis 1:1-2:3.

2. What Makes Man Superior To Animals? (The Creation of Man In God's Image)

3. Man created in God's image-spirit, intelligence, dominion, Gen. 1:26-28; 2:7-8.

4. Institution of marriage-woman, an help suitable for man, Gen. 2:18-24.

A. *We see that when sin entered into the world all that satan had to tempt with was used on Adam and Eve*

B. *This was the same tactics and was used against our Lord when He was tempted Matt. 4:1-11*

C. *It is what the Apostles John and Peter warns against 1st John 2:16, 2nd Pet. 2:10*

1. For the first time we read Man sought to worship God Gen. 4:26

A. Man's first relationship with God was ideal. God placed man in the Garden of Eden and provided every necessary thing, Gen. 2:8-17.

1. Man is in God's image, thus God did not force Adam to serve Him. The devil tempted; and by his own choice, man chose to please self rather than God Gen. 3:1-13; Rom. 6:16-18.

D. *God destroyed That Which He Had Created? (The Flood)*

1. Man's wickedness increased; God purposed to destroy the world, Gen. 6:5-7.

2. Through the righteousness of Noah eight souls were spared, Gen. 6:8-10:32.

3. God has promised to destroy the world again, 2 Pet. 3:1-14.

E. *How Did Man Become Separated Into Different Nations? (The Division of Man)*

1. The Tower of Babel-confusing of tongues, Gen. 11:1-9.

2. The descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, Gen. 10, 11.

F. *Who Are The Jews, and Why Were They God's Chosen People? (The Call of Abraham)*

1. The Land promise (Canaan, Palestine), Gen. 12:1.

2. The Nation promise (Israel, Hebrews, Jews), Gen. 12:2.

3. The Spiritual promise (Christ), Gen. 12:3, "bless all families ..." Gal. 3:26-29.

III. Significant Facts Of The Mosaic Dispensation:

A. *This period is named after Moses, for it was through him God delivered the law to the Jews.*

B. *Duration*

1. This age begins with the giving of the Ten Commandments at Mt. Sinai and lasts until the death of Christ, a span of about 1500 years.

2. The Bible record of this period may be read from Exodus 20 through Acts 1.

C. *Background*

1. Abraham had been promised a great nation and land (Gen. 12:1-2). Jacob, Abraham's grandson, whose name was changed to Israel, fathered twelve sons, known as the twelve Patriarchs. The descendants of these sons became known as the twelve tribes of Israel.

2. The twelve tribes of Israel formed the nation of Israel. Through Joseph, the great-grandson of Abraham, the Israelites spent 215 years in Egypt (Read Gen. 12-50). When God was ready to lead this nation to the promised land, He chose Moses to be His spokesman (Read Ex. 1-20). This occurred 430 years from the time of the original promise to Abraham (Gal. 3:16-17).

D. Importance

1. Many interesting and profitable events are contained in this period. Valuable lessons can be gleaned from the lives of Moses, Joshua, Samson, Samuel, Saul, David, Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, and many others (Rom. 15:4; Heb. 11:32).
2. One must keep in mind the underlying thread which ties this period of time to the rest of the Bible-God is preparing the world for Christ.
3. We can best analyze the significance of this period in relationship to Christ by studying about the law of Moses.

IV. The Laws of Moses: Its Purpose and Duration

A. The Law Was Given To The Jews-Not For All Nations.

1. The Ten Commandments were given on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 20:1-17).
2. These commandments, written on tables of stone, were important; however, we must remember that the Law of Moses included many other laws pertaining to their worship and government. The complete total of all commandments which were delivered through Moses, both religious and civil, are referred to as “the law of Moses” (Acts 13:38-39). The Law of Moses is the same as the Law of the Lord (2 Chron. 34:14; Luke 2:22-24).
3. This law was not given to all people or for all ages, but was given to the Jews only at Mt. Sinai (Horeb) Ex. 31:17-18; Nehemiah 9:13-14.
 - a. Not given to fathers, Deut. 5:1-3, 12, 15.
 - b. Not dealt so with any nation, Psalms 147:19-20.
 - c. One law for Israel and the stranger, Ex. 12:43-49.

B. The Law Was To Serve As A Schoolmaster, Gal. 3:19-29.

1. Worship revealed by this law consisted of animal sacrifices and observance of various days, weeks, months, and years.
2. Its sacrifices were as a shadow of the sacrifice of Christ, Heb. 9:19-28; 10:1.
3. Through its commandments man was made conscious of sin and his need for a Savior, Gal. 3:19; Rom. 3:20; Rom. 7:7,13.

C. The Law Did Not Provide Remission of Sins, Acts 13:38-39.

1. Every year sacrifices had to be made again because sins were remembered, Heb. 10:14.
2. For this reason, the law was called “weak and unprofitable.” Heb. 7:18-19.

D. The Law Came To An End With The Death Of Christ.

1. A new covenant was necessary which would provide remission of sins, Heb. 8:6-8, 13.

2. The New Testament became of force at His death, Heb. 9:15-17.
3. The law was nailed to the cross, Col. 2:14-17.
4. Both Gentile and Jew now have hope in Christ, Eph. 2:11-17; Col. 3:11-12.
5. The Ten Commandments (written on tables of stone) were also done away when Christ died, 2 Cor. 3:7-14.
6. Actually the New Testament contains every one of the ten commandments with the exception of "Remember the Sabbath Day." Christians worship on the first day of the week (the Lord's Day), Acts 20:7; Rev. 1:10.

E. To Serve the Law Makes the Cross of None Effect.

1. If righteousness is by the law, Christ is died in vain, Gal. 2:21.
2. Those who justify their religion by the law are fallen from grace, Gal. 5:2-4.
3. We neither search the Old Testament to learn how to become Christians nor to learn how to worship God as Christians.
 - a. We do believe and study the Old Testament, for it teaches the nature of God, the sureness of His word, and of His exceeding love for us, Rom. 15:4.
 - b. The example of Israel serves as an admonition to Christians, 1 Cor. 10:6-12.

III. Chronological Events of the Mosaic Dispensation

A. Forty Years In Wilderness Because Of Unbelief, Numbers 13;14; Deut. 1. 1. Israel murmured and complained; lacked faith, Heb. 3:12-19.

2. Joshua led the Israelites after the death of Moses, Deut. 1:35-39.

B. Conquest of Canaan

1. Under the leadership of Joshua the Israelites gained the land promised to Abraham, Gen. 12:1.
2. Received all the land God had promised them, Josh. 21:43-45; 23:14; 1 Kings 4:21.

C. Period of the Judges

1. Fifteen judges ruled over a span of 450 years, Acts 13:20.
2. The most familiar names are Deborah, Gideon, Samson, and Samuel, Heb. 11:32.

D. The United Kingdom

1. Saul, David, and Solomon reigned forty years each.
2. Israel reached its greatest strength during this period, 1 Kings 10:1-7.

E. The Divided Kingdom

1. Upon the death of Solomon Israel became a divided nation. The ten Northern tribes led by Jeroboam and the two Southern tribes led by Rehoboam were separated.
2. The Northern Kingdom (Israel) was taken captive by the Assyrians in 721 B.C.
3. The Southern Kingdom (Judah) was overthrown by the Babylonians in 606 B.C.

F. The Age of the Prophets (The fall of the nation and prophecies of Christ).

1. During the decline of the nation, the captivity, and the return to Jerusalem God spoke through the prophets.
2. Their mission was to try to save the nation from its idolatry and wickedness; failing in this, they announced the nation's destruction. However, they foretold that a remnant would be spared.
3. Out of this remnant would come the Promised Seed of Abraham (Christ), who would bring all nations to God.

G. Return From Captivity

1. The first remnant of Israelites was led back to Jerusalem under the guidance of Zerubbabel who started them rebuilding the temple in 536 B.C.
2. The second remnant was led by Ezra, who helped to reorganize and re-establish the nation, in 457 B.C.
3. The third remnant was led by Nehemiah who directed the rebuilding of the wall about the city of Jerusalem in 444 B.C.

I. The New Testament Is God's Revelation For Christians

A. Its Central Theme Is Christ, Gal. 4:4-5; Matt. 1:21-25.

1. The books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John tell of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ which is "the gospel", 1 Cor. 15:1-4.
2. The book of Acts records the history of how the apostles preached the gospel and of what the early church did as they received it.
3. The books of Romans through Revelation are letters written to churches and individual Christians exhorting them to faithfulness and guarding them against false doctrine.

B. The Birth And Life Of Christ

1. John the Baptist prepared the way, Matt. 3:1-6.
 - a. The law and the prophets prophesied until John, Matt. 11:13.
 - b. John bore witness that Jesus is the Son of God, John 1:29-34.
2. His earthly ministry was in preparation for the kingdom, Mark 1:14-15.
 - a. Jesus preached to the Jews only, Matt. 15:24
 - b. During His lifetime, He sent apostles only to Jews, Matt. 10:5-7.

C. The Death Of Christ

1. Actually, the Christian Period begins with the death of Christ, for at death His will became "of force," Heb. 9:16-17; Col. 2:14.
2. The church was not established till after His death, Matt. 16:18.

3. The gospel was not preached to “all the world” till then, Mark 16:15-16.

II. God’s Eternal Plan Of Salvation Fulfilled In Christ, Eph. 1:10, 3:10-11

A. Old Testament Promises Are Fulfilled In Christ.

1. Promise to the serpent, Gen. 3:15 - Fulfilled: Heb. 2:14-15
2. Promise to Abraham, Genesis 12:3 - Fulfilled: Gal. 3:26-29
3. Promise to Moses, Deut. 18:15 - Fulfilled: Acts 3:22-26
4. Promise to David, 2 Sam. 7:12-16 - Fulfilled: Acts 2:29-36

B. The Promised Kingdom Is Fulfilled In Christ.

1. Predicted to be established in the fourth kingdom from Nebuchadnezzar, which would be in the days of the Roman empire, Dan. 2:40-45.
 - a. Gabriel announced His kingship at His birth, Luke 1:31-33.
 - b. Peter declared His rule after His ascension, Acts 2:29-36.
2. His kingdom is spiritual, and His reign is in heaven, Eph. 1:20-21.
 - a. Jesus identified the kingdom as “not of this world” John 18:36-38; Luke 17:20-21.
 - b. He also taught its establishment was “at hand”, Mark 1:14-15.
 - (1) Mark 9:1 - the kingdom would come with power
 - (2) Acts 1:8 - power would come with the Holy Ghost
 - (3) Acts 2:4 - Holy Ghost came on Pentecost; thus kingdom established!

A Summary of the Bible

God created man and placed him in the Garden of Eden. Man sinned and fell from what God designed him to be. God determined to save man from his sinful and fallen condition and inaugurated a plan for man’s ultimate redemption by the calling of Abraham and dealing with him as a father of a nation through which the Messiah would come. God led Abraham out of the region of Babylon into the land of Canaan. Because of a famine, Abraham’s descendents migrated to Egypt where they grew into a mighty nation. Then, under the leadership of Moses, and later Joshua, they were led back to Canaan, the promised land. In some four or five hundred years, under David and Solomon, they developed into a mighty nation. Then the kingdom was divided. The northern part, called Israel, consisted of ten tribes and lasted about 250 years and was destroyed by Assyria in 722 B.C. The southern kingdom, called Judah, consisted of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and lasted 135 years longer before falling at the hands of the Babylonians in about 600 B.C. In 536 B.C., a remnant of the nation returned from the seventy-year Babylonian captivity and reestablished their national life in the land of Palestine. Soon thereafter the Old Testament closed.

Four hundred years later, Jesus, the Messiah of Old Testament prophecy, appeared. He performed His redemptive work, was crucified, and rose from the dead on the third day. He then commanded His disciples to carry the story of the gospel to all nations. The church was established in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost following the Lord’s ascension back to Heaven. The disciples in Jerusalem went in every direction with the glorious news of salvation, mainly westward through Asia Minor and Greece, and then to Rome. Much mission effort was carried out by the apostle Paul. In the New Testament period the gospel was

preached to every nation under heaven. With the work of human redemption launched, The books of the Bible inspiringly penned, and the warning of the Lord's return to gather the redeemed home to glory, the New Testament closes.

Acknowledgement

RED BOILING SPRINGS CHURCH OF CHRIST

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The Problem of Sin

David Brassfield



DAVID BRASSFIELD was born in Cushing, OK, September 12, 1954. He also graduated from Cushing High School in 1972. He and Carol were married August 6, 1977 and they have two children: Tiffany (36) and Tyler (30). He graduated from Oklahoma Christian in 1976 with a Bachelor's degree and in 1990 with Master's Degree.

David started preaching in Ripley, OK and has done local work with the following churches of Christ: Duncan, OK; Rose Hill, Kansas; Comanche, Stuart, OK and he is now working with the church in Newalla, OK. He started his work with the church in Newalla in 1986.

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David runs in marathons.

THE PROBLEM OF SIN

You walk into your home and see a scorpion on the floor before you. You exclaim "Where did THIS come from!?" It is not enough to recognize the danger it poses, but you must find out how it got there. "Where did THIS come from" is a question that has countless applications and has been asked countless times by mankind. As it relates to our topic this afternoon, let us apply it to the existence of sin in our lives. From the very first moment we see the stain of sin on our souls, we should be asking how it got there.

We will be looking at how sin often enters the life of a person. We will examine the different ways our sins affect us and those about us. And, we will see how the Lord wants us to deal with those sins.

In the beginning. When we see the beginning of the cosmos and the world and all that is in the world, we see goodness. "And God saw that it was good." was the evaluation of each thing God did. We look at the world around us today and we do not see paradise. Even our home gardens contain thorns and destructive insects, and may even harbor the serpent. The northwest part of our nation is being flooded. The northeast lies frozen beneath six feet of snow. The lower plains suffer from drought. The most destructive hurricanes, tornadoes, rains, fires, earthquakes, winds, sunamis, and heat in recorded history are happening literally before our eyes.

Diseases man thought he had defeated have returned with a vengeance. The best precautions we attempt while dealing with dangerous infections and viruses are defeated and the doctors and nurses are becoming the patients and victims. Children and the elderly are dying because scientists guess wrong about which influenza would strike us this year.

Experts tell us that massive earthquakes may strike at any time: as a matter of fact, the REALLY BIG ONE is long overdue. The same is true about volcanic activity. Some are amazed that we have avoided major eruptions as long as we have.

And sin. . . Sin is perhaps the worst picture we see. Terrorists capture and torture and murder people whose only crime is that they were trying to help others. Religious extremists feel justified killing anyone who tries to utilize their freedom of speech. Radicals lash out at anyone who disagrees with them. Gangs murder just to qualify to join the gang. Thieves walk our streets looking for an open garage door, a running motor, or a purse in the front seat. Predators watch the playgrounds for a child who strays a little too far from someone's oversight. Motorists drive with rage against anyone who merely looks at them the wrong way.

No one is safe. Sitting in a coffee shop in Australia, minding your own business, you may still be the victim of a terrorist with a gun. Patrolling the streets to keep your neighbors safe, you may find yourself the target of someone whose only motivation to hate is the uniform you are wearing. Children in a classroom who have never done any harm to anyone do not come home from school because someone felt bullied. There is no safe haven, whether it is a church, a movie theater, or your work place. How did the perfect place God made become like this? Where did this come from?

Much like the days of Genesis 6, it seems that every thought and intention of man is only evil continually. How does man go from walking in the garden in the presence of God to causing God to regret that he ever made man?

God asked his prophets; Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, and Zechariah, “What do you see?” Some saw the wickedness of the people, sometimes they saw the Lord’s deliverance. It seems that the eye plays a pivotal role in the departure of man from God as well as his return to the Lord’s favor. And, what the eye sees is affected by the heart. A poet wrote, “Two men looked through prison bars. One saw mud, the other stars.”

HOW SIN ENTERED THE WORLD: (Or, What are you looking at?)

“Everyone but your father look at that!” That was a comment made by my mother at some point during most of our vacation trips. The scenery she wanted us to see was either beautiful or unusual. But, my father was not allowed to view it. Mainly because my father (like many drivers) tended to steer in the direction he was looking. Scenery was his pre-technological version of distracted driving.

The problem we all have is that our eyes do not always do the best job at leading us. They can focus our attention in the wrong place and put us in great danger. A driver texting behind the wheel may run full speed into a truck that is stopped ahead. A million different scenarios and more can illustrate how we get into accidents, make the wrong decisions, and . . . even sin. And, too often the eyes are the cause. Consider the following biblical examples.

God had told Adam not to eat of the tree in the midst of the garden. Adam must have passed the word on to Eve, for she knew of the prohibition. But, when the serpent entered the picture, note what he did with Eve’s eyes.

Gen. 3:1-6a, “Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’ 2 The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” 4 “You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. 5 “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” 6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.”

First, the serpent got Eve to take her eyes off the trees from which she could eat and focus on the one which was forbidden. By his lies, he also got her to take her eyes off the command of God and, once again, focus on only the fruit. The hand and the mouth followed the eyes. She SAW the fruit and it was PLEASING to the eye.

Notice in the life of David, one of Israel’s greatest kings and a man after Gods own heart, how his eyes brought sin and suffering into his own home.

2 Sam. 11:1-2, “In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king’s men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem. 2 One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful.”

We know how David committed adultery, murder, and conspired to cover up his part in the whole matter. But, where did it start? With his eyes! They were going where they did not belong and the beauty of a

woman's body led his soul astray.

Notice the life of Peter. He and his companions were trying to cross the sea in the middle of the night when a storm arose. Jesus came to them, walking on the water. When Peter realized it was Jesus, he asked Jesus to invite him to come to him on the water. To the astonishment of all who remained in the boat, Peter actually succeeded in walking on water. Until this moment. . . .

Matt. 14:29-30, "Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, Lord, save me!"

What made Peter sink? Two things: First, he took his eyes off Jesus, and secondly he cast his eyes at the effects of the wind. He no longer saw Jesus, but only that which had battered the boat in which he had been.

Let's look at one last example. Jesus is before Pilate. Luke tells us that Pilate made at least three attempts to free Jesus. Matthew tells us what happened at the moment Pilate went from trying to release Jesus to handing him over to the Jews for crucifixion.

Matt. 27:22-24, "What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ? Pilate asked. They all answered, Crucify him! 23 Why? What crime has he committed? asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, Crucify him! 24 When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. I am innocent of this man's blood, he said. It is your responsibility!"

There it is! He SAW. Saw what? Only the crowd. Only the threat that Rome would be displeased if he permitted a riot over one insignificant Jewish life. Only a way out of his mess. All he had to do was let the crowd have its way. Turn the other way and look elsewhere while an innocent man was led away to suffer the most cruel form of execution man had created.

Pilate had told Jesus that he had the authority to release or crucify Jesus. The answer Jesus gave him in John 19:11 was, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me up to you has the greater sin." Perhaps Pilate's sin was not the greater sin that night, but it was still sin.

It was sin because he would not act upon what else he saw that day. He saw Jewish leaders who had delivered up Jesus, not because he was worthy of death, but because the Jews were envious of him (Matt. 27:18). He saw an innocent man. He saw Herod's judgment that found nothing worthy of death in Jesus.

Our eyes are truly the window to our soul. Note what Jesus says about our eyes in Matt. 6:22, "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" How vital it is to our soul's welfare that our eyes work as God designed them.

How did sin get here? I realize it is more than simply one's eyesight. We must also deal with the lust of the flesh and the boastful pride of life. But even they are often driven by the eyes. And, one need not be sighted to be led away by his eyes. Close your eyes for a moment and listen as I speak. Imagine yourself walking along a beautiful beach with palm trees gently swaying near the shore. A lone white bird soars overhead. The waves gently push a piece of driftwood onto the sand and if you look very closely you can see surfers out to sea and a seashell at your feet. You reach down and pick it up, noticing how the sand has forced its way between your toes.

Did you see those things? How? In your mind's eye. You may have even imagined the feel of the breeze, the smell of the salt air, coconuts on the trees, and the sand beneath your feet. The eyes and the mind can take us nearly anywhere. They can send us to heaven, or drag us in the opposite direction.

Satan knows the power of the eye. He uses it to draw us away from God, away from the right path. And into sin. One word used that is translated as sin means to miss the mark. It is hard to hit the mark if you are not looking at it. Another word for sin denotes a transgression, going where you should not go. Again, it is

hard to stay on the right path if you keep looking at things that are off the path. Close your eyes and try to see how far you go before you are no longer walking a straight path.

Sin came into the world because man looked away from God and toward that which God had forbidden. The serpent painted a pretty picture for Eve to admire and that picture covered up the dire consequences the Lord had shown them.

And, so all mankind has been led into sin. Sin spread to all men, Paul tells us. Not just the effects of Adams sin, which brought death into the world, but the tendency to sin is something that has touched all of us. The king of Israel who had a heart after God was an adulterer and murderer. Moses, the lawgiver, failed to give God the honor among the people when he claimed credit for bringing them water from a rock. Like a contagious disease in the midst of people who have not been immunized, sin touched every life.

LIVING WITH THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

We must deal with at least three separate consequences of sin. First, there are the consequences that happen to us when another person sins and his sin harms us. The thief who steals hurts the person who has labored to acquire what was taken. The man of violence may leave someone scarred for life. A murderer will leave a family without a husband and father. The victims did not commit those sins, but they must live with the fact that another person had a choice to do good or evil and chose to do evil.

Secondly, we must deal with the consequences of sin that we have committed against our bodies. Some sins may irreversibly damage us. An alcoholic may cause his own paralysis when he chooses to drive while drunk and wrecks his car. Even if he never drinks again and counsels others against drunkenness, he may receive forgiveness, yet never walk again. Years ago I was privileged to meet a man named Richard Taylor. Richard had been a heroin addict. His friend thought it would be funny if he ordered Richard out of the car as they drove on Indian Nations Turnpike. When Richard got out, his friend shot him several times. Another driver saw Richard and called for an ambulance. A preacher named Bill Banks visited Richard often in ICU and eventually led him to Christ. His life now changed, for several years Richard worked with youth and spoke to many high school students about the dangers of drugs. Even though he had turned his life around and received forgiveness from God, he still walked with a limp and he still suffered from Hepatitis C, which he got from an infected needle during his drug days. He passed away over 20 years ago from complications of Hepatitis C. His limp and disease were things he shared with his audience when he warned young men and women that they should not follow the path he once walked.

Thirdly, we must deal with the emotional and spiritual damage caused by sin. Paul never forgot that he was a persecutor of the church. Moses was pained to see the land of promise knowing he would never set foot in it. A former drug dealer still has to walk by the cemetery with graves filled with people who overdosed on what he sold them. A church leader may repent of his affair, but the souls who left the Lord because of his actions may never return. Even if forgiven, all sins have lasting results.

When man sins, he may be forgiven, but only if he meets the conditions God has set forth. However, he must live with the consequences of his sins. Esau found that out as the writer of Hebrews noted about him, “. . . he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.” (Heb. 12:17c)

OUR POWERLESSNESS AGAINST SIN

There are many diseases that are incurable. Today, one out of four people living in New York City suffer from an incurable sexually transmitted disease. Medicine can treat the symptoms, but it remains and it is still contagious. Sometimes there is damage that cannot be undone. A home can suffer a fire to the extent that it cannot be rebuilt, but someone must complete the destruction the flames started. Only then can the construction begin for a new structure. A soul can be so marred by sin that the person must die. . . . to sin.

Sin is an incurable ailment. Nothing man can do will make it go away. No amount of regret can undo an unkind act or word. Numberless apologies may be of some comfort to both parties, but the memory and damage to the relationship will be an eternal scar. With some patients, the only way a cancer is destroyed

is if the host body, the cancer victim, dies. But, in the case of the victim, the death of the cancer is also his ultimate defeat.

Sin has been described as gangrene and cancer. There is a cure for it, but it lies beyond the power of the person infected by it. The Apostle Paul spoke of his sins in Romans 7. He writes of the inner distress of doing the very things he despised and found himself too weak to do the things he aspired to do. He ended his introspective view with the heartfelt and desperate question, "Who will set me free from the body of this death?" Paul seeks deliverance from sin and personifies sin as his own body. Satan had become so adept at corrupting mankind and all that God had created that the word flesh is synonymous with immorality.

Once one has sinned, he becomes helpless. . . dead. How many questions must a student miss to no longer have a 100% on his test? After a batter has struck out, how many hits in a row must he have to be able to say he has a 1,000 batting average? If a driver has 50 years of experience behind the wheel, it only takes one accident, one ticket, one mistake to make him less than a perfect driver. Those things can never be regained. In the same way, once one has sinned he has given up the right to say that he has earned a place in heaven. Sin leads to death.

Even in the garden, sin led to immediate death. There was the spiritual death of Adam and Eve as they found themselves driven from God's presence and the garden. There was the death of the animal or animals from which God made them coverings. Man becomes totally helpless once sin has entered his life. Those sins cannot be undone any more than a bell can be unringed or a blow unthrown. Helpless. Hopeless. Powerless. Such is our fate. Because we sinned.

GOD'S ANSWER TO SIN IN THE WORLD

The answer for every person who has suffered from sins and its effects, no matter how severe and extensive they may be, is Jesus. Jesus Christ our Lord was the answer to the question Paul asked in Rom. 7:24. Jesus set him free from the Law. The Law could only point out sin. The Law could only condemn those who broke it. The Law could only justify those who kept it perfectly, but none were able. Even the Gentiles, who were a law unto themselves could not keep their own standards.

God sent His Son, Jesus, to take away the condemnation, place it upon himself, and take it out of the city and pay its price. Jesus lived the perfect life. His enemies were unable to trip him up in what he said. Satan was unable to get him to give in to the lust of the flesh (make these stones bread), surrender to the lust of the eyes (all the kingdoms of earth I will give to you), or give in to the boastful pride of life (throw yourself down from the pinnacle of the temple so the angels can bear you up before the people).

Isaiah described the coming Messiah in a beautiful, yet tragic passage in chapter 53.

Who has believed what he has heard from us?
And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

For he grew up before him like a young plant,
and like a root out of dry ground;
he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,
and no beauty that we should desire him.

He was despised and rejected by men;
a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;
and as one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken,

smitten by God, and afflicted.

But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned-every one-to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he opened not his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he opened not his mouth.

By oppression and judgment he was taken away;
and as for his generation, who considered
that he was cut off out of the land of the living,
stricken for the transgression of my people?

And they made his grave with the wicked
and with a rich man in his death,
although he had done no violence,
and there was no deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him;
he has put him to grief;
when his soul makes an offering for guilt,
he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days;
the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied;
by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,
make many to be accounted righteous,
and he shall bear their iniquities.

Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,
because he poured out his soul to death
and was numbered with the transgressors;
yet he bore the sin of many,
and makes intercession for the transgressors.

Note all that Christ did. Note what he bore. Note what he did not do. Note what was done to him. Note what God did in response to his life. Note what he accomplished for you and me.

Where are you and I in this account? What are our deeds? What contributions did we make to justifi-

cation, to the bearing of sins? We are not absent. You see, we are the reasons he was despised, forsaken, stricken, pierced, crushed, chastened, scourged, oppressed, afflicted, anguished, numbered with the wicked, and poured out to death. The griefs he bore were ours. Our transgressions crushed him. He was cut off from the land of the living in our place. His intercession cost him his blood.

We are not the cause of our salvation, we are the recipients of it, through Christ. Were we to have gone to the cross, we would be as the thief who noted that he and his partner were getting what they deserved. There would be no credit given if we simply received payment for our crimes. We can no more save ourselves from our sins than a corpse can dig its way out of a grave. Just as Israel awaited someone to deliver them from the bondage of Egypt, we are in need for deliverance from the bondage of sin. So, God sent his son and he sent us the way to follow.

Our eyes have led us away from the love of God and his will. They can also lead us back.

THE WAY WE GOT LOST IS A KEY TO BEING FOUND

To regain the control of our eyes we need:

1. To refuse to look where we should not.

Job 31:1, "I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin?" Prov. 23:31-32, "Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper."

Do you struggle with pornography? Look away! Avoid the magazine rack. Don't visit those web sites that you would hide from your family. Make that covenant with your eyes. If they don't look, you won't stray.

2. To look toward where we need to go.

2 Pet. 3:13, "But according to his promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells." Phil. 4:8, "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things."

Children are excellent examples for the way we should see the world. A woman was traveling with her four year old son one day when a convertible car pulled alongside them on a busy highway. To her dismay, the woman in the convertible stood up, and turned a complete circle in the slow moving vehicle. She wasn't wearing a stitch of clothing. The mom thought, "Oh, please, don't let him see this." But, her son did see, and he said, "Momma, look at that woman! She's not wearing her seat belt!" Oh, for the eyes of a child. In Matt. 18:10 Jesus said, "See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you, that their angels in heaven continually behold the face of My Father who is in heaven." Let us look where we know we ought, and keep our eyes there. Let your eyes see what your child sees if you would see God.

3. To look to the one who can save us.

Heb. 12:2, "fixing our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Num. 21:9, "And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived." John 3:14-15, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life."

The apostle John opens his letter of 1 John telling about, "what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld. . . " The word John uses for beheld is the Greek word from which we get the word theater. It implies a view that captures every bit of our attention. As surely as Israelites who were victims of the fiery serpents would live if they looked to the bronze serpent, we who are victims of that serpent of old will live if we will

look to our Lord and what he on the cross tells us.

If we would avoid sin, if we would be what we ought to be, and if we wish to hear our Lord say, “Well done, good and faithful slave,” then let us live the remainder of our lives with eyes for only our Lord.

Stephen was being stoned to death for preaching Jesus. At the end, he focused his eyes not on the rocks that came toward his body nor on the men that threw them, nor even the man who held their coats; but on the heavens where Jesus was standing at the right hand of God.

What a blessing to see his Lord standing, awaiting his arrival as he closed his eyes to leave the ugliness of this world of sin! May God help us to see the Savior who still awaits our arrival in heaven.

Our eyes have seen enough sin. Let us truly with all our hearts, soul, strength, and mind seek the Lord.

There are no words that can match the joy felt in the hearts of God’s people than the words spoken by the disciples to Thomas, “We have seen the Lord!”

The Seed of Woman

Frank R. Williams



FRANK R. WILLIAMS was born in Seminole, OK, on December 16, 1940. Frank and Martha (Gordon) were married on September 8, 1967, and they have four children: Virginia, she is married to Paul Moisant, Clint, who is married to Teresa (Goode), Benjamin, who is married to Selene (McKnight) and they have one son, Lucas and a second son on the way, and John, who has one son, Elias. Frank graduated from Seminole High School, attended Yuba Junior College in Marysville, CA, and graduated from the Northside School of Preaching in Harrison, AR, with “Master” in Sacred Literature in 1972. Frank also taught in this school through the years, starting in 1972 – 1977, serving under all three directors: Reggie Nauls, A. J. Hendrix, and Bryon Nichols. He has also taught in: The School of Biblical Knowledge and The Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies, which he continues to teach and serve as Dean of Students.

Frank started in 1968, first in Jasper, AR. and has preached almost 46 years. He has done local work in Arkansas, Wyoming, Missouri, and Oklahoma. He has preached in the following states, in lectureships, gospel meetings, and other occasions: Arkansas, Oklahoma, Wyoming, Missouri, Texas, Georgia, Iowa, and California. He has written articles appearing in: Gospel Advocate, Firm Foundation, Christian Standard, Gospel Journal, edited, “The Spirit of Restoration” for about three years, and now serves as editor of the Journal “One Heart.” Frank made a preaching trip to India in 1977. Frank is now serving as an elder and associate preacher for the Barnes church of Christ.

Frank served this nation in the Army Security Agency with one year being in Korea.

In coming out of “darkness into light, from Atheism into Christianity,” the coming of “the seed of woman” is the pivotal point in time. All the Old Testament pointed forward to it, while the four gospel accounts point at it, and the remaining New Testament books point back to it. There is one passage which sums it up as it brings the Old Testament references to “the seed of the woman,” then, it reveals the results of the seed of the woman. The passage is Galatians chapter four: “Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” Gal. 4:1-6).

In these words, the apostle has covered three historical ages: first, those who were under the Law of Moses; second, the transitional period, and third, the adoption of sons. In the first stage, in its larger context, there are thirty-nine books; in the second stage, there are four books, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; in the third stage, we have the final twenty-three books of the New Testament and until the second coming of Christ. It is understood in the first stage, that the Old Testament gives us the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, which became the nation of Israel, was divided from all other people known as Gentiles with the giving of the Law of Moses. This separation, however, did not change the promise in regard to “the seed of woman!” This requires that we go back to the “*protoevangelium*” – the first pronouncement of Christ “in seed of woman” in – Genesis 3:15: “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” Though there is much debate among religious people, high and low, there is no doubt in my mind that these words “her seed” refer to Jesus and the bruising of his heel took place on the cross and in the same event, he rendered a death blow

to the head of Satan on the cross, as man was spiritually freed from the bondage of Satan! Therefore, in the opening pages of the Bible, God has given us a figurative view of “the cross of Christ!” It is this bloodline, the “seed of the woman,” that is carefully followed throughout the Old Testament.

The words, “the fulness of the time,” refers to the gathering up of all the Old Testament prophecies about the “seed of woman,” the bloodline, which was so carefully guarded from Adam to Jesus. In the early pages of Genesis, Moses wrote: “This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created. And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth: And the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years: and he begat sons and daughters: And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died. And Seth lived an hundred and five years, and begat Enos” (Gen. 5:1-6). Following the great Biblical flood, Moses once more wrote: “Now these are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth: and unto them were sons born after the flood” (Gen. 10:1). Shem being in the genealogy of “the seed of woman,” Moses picks up the genealogy in Genesis chapter eleven: “These are the generations of Shem: Shem was an hundred years old, and begat Arphaxad two years after the flood: And Shem lived after he begat Arphaxad five hundred years, and begat sons and daughters. And Arphaxad lived five and thirty years, and begat Salah: And Arphaxad lived after he begat Salah four hundred and three years, and begat sons and daughters. And Salah lived thirty years, and begat Eber: And Salah lived after he begat Eber four hundred and three years, and begat sons and daughters. And Eber lived four and thirty years, and begat Peleg: And Eber lived after he begat Peleg four hundred and thirty years, and begat sons and daughters. And Peleg lived thirty years, and begat Reu: And Peleg lived after he begat Reu two hundred and nine years, and begat sons and daughters. And Reu lived two and thirty years, and begat Serug: And Reu lived after he begat Serug two hundred and seven years, and begat sons and daughters. And Serug lived thirty years, and begat Nahor: And Serug lived after he begat Nahor two hundred years, and begat sons and daughters. And Nahor lived nine and twenty years, and begat Terah: And Nahor lived after he begat Terah an hundred and nineteen years, and begat sons and daughters. And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran” (Gen. 11:10-26).

This brings us to a very important change in the history of the Old Testament! God prepares to make a change, as he protects the “seed of woman.” It is the generations of Terah that Moses will cover next and this will bring us to Abram. Abram will be the key historical figure, as it is to him that God will make “the promise” that is “the promise” that becomes so identified in the New Testament. As a matter of fact, it is “the promise” which Paul uses as the foundation for our text in Galatians chapter four, as chapter three ends with these words: “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:24-29). As Moses nears the end of Genesis chapter eleven he continues with the all-important genealogy of the “seed of woman,” picking it up with Terah: “Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot. And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees” (Gen. 11:27-28). Notice that Terah is the father of Abram, who is better known to us as Abraham, as his name will be changed by God later. Not stated here, but it happened here; and is clarified in Genesis 15:7: “And he said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.” Stephen also addressed this point in Acts seven, starting verse two: “And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell” (Acts 7:2-4). This makes it clear, that God called Abram while

he was in “the land of the Chaldaeans” and before he dwelt in “Charran” which is Haran. The reason for this move, also not stated here is revealed by Joshua: “And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood (before the crossing of the Red Sea, frw) in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods” (Joshua 24:2). Now we have a more complete view of the full story of Abram’s call to leave the land of his nativity, Ur of Chaldees; even his father Terah was one “who served other gods.” This idolatry put “the seed of woman” in danger!

This brings us to the promises God made to Abram as he was told to leave the land of Ur of Chaldees. Moses wrote: “Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee” (Gen. 12:1). Before continuing the text, it is most important to note the past tense of this text. Read with care the words, “Now the LORD had said unto Abram.” When had God said it to Abram? At the same time God told Abram to get out of Ur of Chaldees, while he was still in Ur of Chaldees! Now, here is what God had said to Abram at that time: “And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:2-3). Abram was seventy-five years old at this time. However, if we read this without seeing the “seed of woman” we are failing to see the full story. It is necessary to move forward in time; to the time when God changed the names of Abram and Sarai. This takes us to Genesis chapter seventeen, where God said, starting in verse four: “As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee” (Gen. 17:4-6). But, God did not stop here, as the “seed of woman” is required; thus, continuing to read: verse 15: “And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her” (Gen. 17:15-16). It is here that God makes a covenant with the son of Sarah: “And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him” (Gen. 17:19). It is most important that it be kept in mind that this “covenant” was not made with Ishmael, the son of Hagar and Abram; nor was it made with sons of Keturah and Abraham, his second wife (Gen. 25:1). No, the “seed of woman” was to run through Sarah; thus, Isaac is called the “only begotten son” in Hebrews: “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten (monogenēs) son” (Heb. 11:17). Yes, this is the same Greek word used is referring to Jesus in John 1:14. Isaac was the “only begotten son” who was the “seed of woman” through whom the promise would come! God would then make this same promise to Isaac: “in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 26:4), then, to Jacob, “in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 28:14). This becomes “the promise” of the both the Old and the New Testaments. It is directly related to Paul’s words, “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.” At the heart of “the promise” is the “seed of the woman!”

Then, in the seventh chapter of the book of Isaiah, God makes one of the most mysterious and intriguing statements in the entire Bible: “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14). That it sets forth the “seed of woman” is undeniable! In another context, but the words certainly come to mind, Jesus said: “With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible” (Matt. 19:26). A “virgin shall conceive!” Yes, there has been and still is much debate about the Hebrew word “*almah*,” from which our English word “virgin” is translated, but debates do not change the truth! Just here, it is needful to call attention to the Septuagint, which is a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. The term “Septuagint” gets its name from the fact that seventy Jewish scholars did the translating. This is most important in this study. When these Jewish scholars came to the Hebrew word “*almah*,” they used the Greek word “*parthenos*,” which means, “a

virgin, a marriageable maiden, a woman who has never had sexual intercourse with a man.” This helps us greatly in understanding what the Hebrew word “*almah*” means and is most important to our study. However, this is not all.

Let us turn our attention to the apostle Matthew on the subject, as he wrote: “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 1:18). Then, he followed with, which is a quote of the Isaiah passage: “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (Matt. 1:23). Matthew, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit used the same Greek word as did the seventy Jewish scholars in the Septuagint, “*Parthenos*,” when he came to translating the Hebrew word used by Isaiah, “*almah*,” which is our English “virgin!” The Greek word, “*Parthenos*,” means: a virgin, marriageable maiden, a woman who has never had sexual intercourse with a man (Thayer). This means that the debate is now more than the meaning of words, but the debate has shifted to the inspiration of the apostle Matthew. Was Matthew, the apostle of Christ, inspired when he wrote “The Gospel According to Matthew?”

In our study of “the seed of woman” we have come face to face with the reality of Satan’s first war with God! Not only did he desire to destroy the “seed of woman,” but he has desired from the beginning to destroy the word of God; thus, The Book which reveals the bloodline of the “seed of woman! He started by changing what God had said, as he spoke to Eve: “Ye shall not surely die,” when God had said: “for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:17). This first war is clearly seen when it comes to the word “virgin,” it strikes at the inspiration of the word of God and the “seed of woman.” Notice with me what happens when you remove the “virgin” from the context:

First, you remove the harmony between Isaiah and Matthew,
Second, you remove the inspiration of Matthew,
Third, you remove God with us, (Emmanuel),
Fourth, you remove the word was made flesh (John 1:1,14),
Fifth, you remove the Son of God,
Sixth, you remove God who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son,
Seventh, you remove the sacrifice for sins,
Eighth, you remove our Redemption,
Ninth, you remove our salvation, and
Tenth, you remove the meaning of the words of our text:

“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law”

As there is no “fulness of the time,” God never sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law!

But, my friends and brethren, I call your attention to a few words of Matthew. He wrote: “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 1:18). Please pay attention to the words at the end of this verse: “she was found with child of the Holy Spirit,” not of man, but “of the Holy Spirit.” He was not begotten of man; he had no earthly father, but was “of the Holy Spirit!” Here we have “the seed of woman!” Now, notice with me the words found in our text, Galatians 4:4: “made of a woman.” The Greek word translated “made,” is “*ginomai*” and means: to become, i.e. to come into existence, begin to be, receive being (Thayer). Get this now, there was a point in time, when Jesus did not exist, and there was a point in time when he came into existence! This point is identified in the word “conceive” in Isaiah 7:14 and “with child” in Matthew 1:23. Once more, Matthew tells us what it means to “conceive;” it means to be “with child;” and to be “with child” means to “conceive!” When Mary “conceived,” Jesus came into existence! Please understand this is John’s “God in the flesh,” and is not the beginning of God, as God exists:

“I am that I am!” But, Jesus of Nazareth had a beginning; God in the flesh, God with us had a beginning; “the seed of woman” had a beginning! There is Paul’s: “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.”

“The seed of woman” came into being “under the law;” his total existence on this earth was “under the law.” Jesus himself said: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil” (Matt. 5:17). After his resurrection, he said this to his apostles: “These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me” (Luke 24:44). Here is Jesus’ division of the Old Testament, as he divides it into three parts: 1) the law of Moses, 2) the prophets, and 3) the psalms. Let us here notice one point of prophecy, from each of these three divisions, which he fulfilled. First, from the law of Moses: “The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken” (Deut. 18:15). Jesus of Nazareth was that Prophet! Peter on the day of Pentecost quotes Moses and applies the words to Christ: “And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you” (Acts 3:20-22). Second, from the prophets: “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken” (Isa. 54:7-8). The man of Ethiopia was reading: “He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth” (Acts 8:32-33). Then, Luke wrote: “Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus” (Acts 8:35). Jesus of Nazareth was that Lamb! And third, the Psalms: “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool” (Psa. 110:1). With this Psalm the Lord put the Pharisees to silence in Matthew chapter twenty-two: “While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions” (Matt. 22:41-46). Of course, the answer is in the truth that he was while on earth, God in the flesh; he was both God and man; therefore, he was both David’s LORD and David’s son. Jesus of Nazareth was both David’s LORD and his son! It was and is, just as Jesus said to the eleven after his resurrection: “These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.”

Paul wrote one of the most revealing and powerful sections of scriptures on “the seed of woman,” which reveals the meaning to his words: “when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman,” in Philippians chapter two, starting at verse six: “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil 2:6-8). First, Paul said that Christ “being in the form of God;” meaning he bore the form, the sovereignty of God, all that is God, as viewed by the inhabitants of heaven. Second, he “thought it not robbery to be equal with God;” meaning, he did not think that his maintaining this sovereignty with God was to be eagerly clung to or retained, at the cost of mankind’s eternal damnation. Third, “But made himself of no reputation;” in that he stripped himself of all privileges and the rights of Deity. Fourth, he “took upon him the form of a servant,” as is seen as he prayed in the garden, “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will,

but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). Fifth, “was made in the likeness of men;” not being seen in the “form” of God, but being seen in “the likeness of men.” In this state, he was hungry, thirsty, lonely, and he suffered. Moving now to verse eight, Paul continued, sixth: “And being found in fashion as a man;” very much like the last phrase, Paul is saying that he who is God was “found” in all that is humanity. This would include being able to be tempted with sin, as in Hebrews: “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). Seventh, “he humbled himself,” in this he was ranked below others who are honoured above him. This may be seen as he stood before Pilate, he said: “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” (John 18:36). He subjected himself to earthly powers! Eighth, “and became obedient unto death;” like all mankind, he was subject to death. As stated in Hebrews: “And as it is appointed unto men once to die” (Heb. 9:27); so Jesus in his humanity, died once! Finally, the apostle identifies the kind of death Jesus suffered: “even the death of the cross.” It was not just “death,” but “death of the cross!” With these words, the apostle has taken us all the way back to Genesis 3:15: “it (the seed of woman, frw) shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” The serpent has bruised the “heel” of the “seed of woman,” but in so doing the “seed of woman” has bruised his head. The price of our redemption was paid and the way of mankind’s freedom from the bondage of Satan opened.

When Paul wrote: “when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman” in the above he gave us “the seed of woman,” revealing to us the humanity of Son of God, “the Son of man” and showed to us the means of our salvation. In the above text, Philippians 2:6-8, the apostle has revealed to us in six phrases, “the Word was made flesh:” 1) “But made himself of no reputation,” 2) “took upon him the form of a servant,” 3) “was made in the likeness of men,” 4) “being found in fashion as a man,” 5) “he humbled himself, and 6) “became obedient unto death.” Then, in the final phrase, “even the death of the cross,” he has shown to us “the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot!” (1 Pet. 1:18). Thus, Paul has taken us to our redemption, to the subject of all that we preach: “we preach Christ crucified!” (1 Cor. 1:23). Here is a good place to cover the four gospel accounts as they reveal the subject matter, in detail of what Paul wrote about in his phrases. It is a great help to the reader to know who each writer was addressing as he wrote. First, Matthew wrote to the Jews, thus, there are many quotations from the Old Testament; second, Mark wrote with the Romans in mind, thus, he has few quotations from the Old Testament and spends more space in explaining the text; third, Luke wrote to the Greek, and it is said to be the only book in the New Testament with a formal introduction according to the classical Greek style of writing history (1:1-4), in which the author states his subject, his purpose, his method and his audience; and fourth, John was written to all, as he wrote: “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:30-31). John in fact, has given the purpose of the four gospel accounts! They reveal to us “the seed of the woman” of which Moses first addresses in Genesis 3:15 and which Paul said: “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law”.

In the remaining pages, let us give our attention to the life of the “seed of woman,” “the Word became flesh!” Jesus of Nazareth leaving Galilee walking toward the Jordan for the express purpose of being baptized of John. John seeing him said: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). As Jesus is baptized by John, Matthew revealed: he “went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:16-17). Following John being imprisoned, “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:12-17). Then, we find Jesus on the side of a mountain when he delivered what is called, “The sermon on the mount.” In the opening verses of this sermon, as Matthew records it, we have “the beautiful attitudes;” we have “Pentecost pointers.” The first of which reads: “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven;” (Matt. 5:3) and he followed with: “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall

inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:4-8). With these words, Jesus gives the qualities required to enter the kingdom of Christ which is to come on the first Pentecost after his resurrection. It is here that Jesus utters words which are so often misunderstood: “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (verse 9). The “peacemakers” are the peace preachers, the peace preachers are the preachers of the gospel! Just as Paul wrote of the apostles, whom Jesus sent, “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (Rom. 10:15). From here in the sermon, Jesus states before the fact, that his disciples will be persecuted: “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (verse 10). The apostle Peter years later wrote, looking upon the example of “the seed of woman” said: “For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (1 Pet. 2:19-24). Notice the apostle’s use of the word “thankworthy,” which denotes “that which affords joy.” This can only be understood in view of Jesus’ next words: “Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Matt. 5:12). Attention is now called to the great opportunity we have, to guide our fellows: “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid” (Verse 14). Next, attention is called to the challenge of challenges in being a child of God: “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matt. 5:44-45). Finally, he concluded “the sermon on the mount” by revealing who is truly wise: “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it” (Matt. 7:24-27). There is the teaching of “the seed of the woman,” which bruised the head of the Satan!

On the night in which Jesus introduced the Lord’s Supper, having eaten the Passover, one of his own had already coveneted with the chief priests for thirty pieces of “silver”, and he would betray “the seed of woman” which would lead to Satan bruising his heel. Matthew recorded the event: “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matt. 26:26-28). In the words, “this is my body” and “this is my blood,” Jesus was pointing to his death on the cross! It is here that Paul wrote, speaking of Jesus: “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8). Each “first day of the week” those in the kingdom of Christ do as the Jesus said to do: “this do in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19 and Acts 20:7). Following the events, Matthew informs us that after the Passover and introduction of the Lord’s Supper, “when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives” (Matt. 26:30). It is here that Jesus once more begins to tell the disciples of his death and that they shall be “offended” and will be “scattered” because of him. Jesus, Peter, James, and John, go with him to Gethsemane and here the humanity of “the seed of woman” is seen so clearly. The struggle within him is unlike that which has been seen before, nor since; leaving the three of them, Jesus being “sorrowful and very heavy,” goes “about stone’s cast, and kneeled down, and prayed” (Luke 22:41). He prayed these words: “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke

22:42). Three times he did so! Here we are able to see the humanity of Jesus! When he says, “not my will,” he must be referring to his humanity! For the will of Deity is one! It is the same when in Hebrews as it is written he was: “in all points tempted like as we are,” while James reveals that God cannot be tempted (James 1:13). Clearly it is the humanity of Jesus, “the seed of woman” that was tempted in all points as we! Just how intense was Jesus as he prayed to the Father in the garden? Here is how Luke describes it: “And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:44). The word “agony” (the Greek *agōnia*) means: “a struggle for victory,” “severe mental struggles.” Physically, it would describe gymnastic exercise, or wrestling. As Jesus ended the prayer and returned to the three, Judas was making his way up the mount.

Judas would kiss Jesus, as he had given this as a sign by which he would identify Jesus. From here Jesus would be taken first to Annas, (John 18:13), then to Caiaphas (Matt. 26:57) where they sought false witnesses but at first were unable to find any. After a while two false witnesses came forward and all was well (Matt. 16:60). All this taking place in the late night and early morning hours of darkness! As morning came on, Jesus is “delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor” (Matt. 27:2). Pilate questions Jesus and told the chief priests: “I find no fault in this man” (Luke 23:4). However, learning that Jesus was from Galilee and that he belonged unto Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who just happened to be in Jerusalem (Luke 23:7). Herod questioned Jesus and “with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate” (Luke 23:11). It should be noticed, as a side note, Pilate and Herod became friends from that day, as they had been at enmity (Luke 23:12). Now, Pilate understanding “that for envy they had delivered him” desired to release Jesus; having a notable prisoner called Barabbas, he said to them: “Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?” (Matt. 27:17). Pilate, not knowing, “The chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus” (verse 20). Not only did the multitude say, give us “Barabbas,” “But they cried out the more, saying, Let him (Jesus, frw) be crucified” (verse 23). The cowardly Pilate now does the unthinkable: “he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it” (verse 24). However, there is more: “Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him” (Matt. 27:27-31). With these words Jesus is on his way to be crucified! But, he is so weak from having not eaten and having been scourged (John 19:1), the soldier “as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus” (23:26). Jesus is on his way to “Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull” (Matt. 27:33). It was the “third hour” of the day (Mark 15:25). “And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?: (Matt. 15:34). It must be understood, just here, that Jesus is not saying that his Father had turned his back upon him! No, he is saying in the word “forsaken,” (the Greek, “*egkataleipō*”) which means, leave in straits, leave helpless. Jesus in his humanity, and it was his humanity, his physical body that was on the cross and dying, had no means of coming down from the cross. Recall his words in the garden, “not my will, thine will be done. (Luke 22:42 and Matt. 26:42). It was the will of Deity, before the Word was made flesh that “the seed of woman” must die on the cross (Phil. 2:6-8). Therefore, the Father could not come to his rescue; even as he heard the words from his beloved Son. In his Deity he could have called ten thousand angels, but in his humanity, he died alone for you and me!

But, we must not leave our redeemer on the cross! On the third day, “Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them” (Luke 24:1). But a careful read of this verse, does not prove that Jesus was resurrected on the first day of the week, only that the woman came to the sepulchre early the first day

of the week. However, Mark will nail it down for us: “Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, . . .” (Mark 16:9). It was by this act that Jesus was proven to be the son of God: “And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 1:4). Following the resurrection, “the Word” that “was made flesh,” having “purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb. 1:3). There he serves as our high priest: “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:14-15).

Finally, we have followed “the seed of woman” from the “*protoevangelium*” – the first pronouncement of Christ in Genesis, and we have seen, “when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.” We have seen his teaching, we have seen his death, we have seen his resurrection, we have seen his ascension, and we have seen what he is now doing, as he serves as our high priest. So, what have we really seen? Friends and brethren, we have seen God’s redemption! Salvation is before us, but the question remains, “What will you do?”

Jesus, the Son of God

Mike Von Tungeln



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Mike attended Panhandle State University, Pepperdine University, Hawaii Pacific University and received the following degrees: BS in Chemistry, MA in Education, and MS in Information Systems. Mike also attended at the Oklahoma School of Biblical Studies.

He was not a full time preacher, but he shared the pulpit in Kailua, HI, for about three and half years, from 1996 -2000. He is a member of the Ridgecrest church of Christ in Midwest City, OK, where he has served as an elder since October, 2001. Mike has preached in the following states: Hawaii, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Virginia. He has spoken on the Oklahoma City Lectures number of times.

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So far, our lectures have covered "Does God Exist," "Do we have the 'Authentic Bible' today," "God's Word by Prophecy," "God's Word by Science," "God's Word by History," "God's Word by Harmony," "Overview of the Bible," "The Problem of Sin," and "The Seed of Woman." This morning we will discuss Jesus as the Son of God. Let's begin by looking at three very different confessions of Jesus' sonship. The scriptures quoted will be from the American Standard Version.

And the unclean spirits, whensoever they beheld him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. - (Mark 3:11)

And when the centurion, who stood by over against him, saw that he so gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God. - (Mark 15:39)

And a voice came out of the heavens, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased. - (Mark 1:11)

Here we have three very different sources telling us that Jesus is the Son of God. For believers, the voice of the Father, in Mark 1:11 is enough to confirm Jesus' claim to be the Son of God. However, for others, the fact that demons, souls of the evil dead who were allowed to possess humans, or that a Roman centurion, who was most likely a pagan, would testify that Jesus was the Son of God must certainly provoke serious consideration. Jesus had the testimony of the Father. He neither needed nor wanted the testimony of demons. We read in Mark 16:17 and Luke 4:41 that He did not allow them to speak. The testimony of the Roman Centurion, however, would have been important to other gentiles helping them see there was one greater than the idols and images they worshipped.

As I began to study for this lesson, I started to wonder why God, the Father, would choose the father-son relationship between Himself and the second member of the Godhead who would be the savior of the world. It suddenly dawned on me that I was looking at the whole thing backwards. It's not that the worldly father-son relationship defined the relationship between God the Father and Jesus the son but that the relationship of the Father and Jesus, members of the godhead from eternity define what the father-son relationship should be here on earth. Let's look at some of the scriptures that define this relationship.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. - (John 1:1)

I and the Father are one. - (John 10:30)

There are two characteristics of the Father-Son relationship, we must consider. The first characteristic of the relationship we will examine is unity. From the scriptures above we see that the Father and the Son are one and have been one since before the beginning. The unity is the unity of attributes, not person. Marion Fox gives a good explanation of this unity in ***The Work of the Holy Spirit, Volume I***.

“One learns how Jesus and the Father are one from another passage of Scripture (Jn. 17:11 and 20-23). Christians are to be one even as the Father and Son (Jesus) are one. (Jn. 17:11 and 22). Since Christians are not one person but one in purpose, intent, mind, judgment, etc. (1 Cor. 1:10); it follows that the oneness of the Father and Son is oneness of purpose and nature.”¹

Also included in unity is the fact that the attributes of the Father are seen in the Son. In other words, much of what we know about God the Father is revealed through Jesus, the Son. The scriptures below explain this fact.

Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou, Show us the Father? - (John 14:9)

13. who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love; 14. in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins: 15. who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; - (Colossians 1:13-15)

A third aspect of unity we will consider is that although the Father and Son are one in purpose, they perform different functions to fulfill that purpose. Again, we can get a very helpful illustration of the function of the different members of the Godhead from Marion Fox.

One finds the same pattern when he considers the revealed will of God. The father was the source of the will (cf. Heb. 10:7, Jn. 6:38, 5:36, 1 Cor. 2:9, Heb. 3:1, Lk. 22:42, and Eph. 3:11 which speak of the father sending the Son). The Son was sent to live the perfect life (personify the word of God, Jn. 1:1-3, 14) and execute the will of saving mankind (Lk. 22:42 and Jn. 3:16). The Holy Spirit then accomplished the task of organizing the will of God into a form that man could use (putting it into the Scriptures for man's usage, 1 Cor. 2:9-11). This is why the Holy Spirit was sent by Christ to guide the apostles into all the truth (Jn. 16:12-15).²

The next characteristic we will look at is obedience. Even though the Father and the Son are equal, the Son obeys the Father. This relationship is based on role, not value, worth or ability. Let me illustrate. As a young Marine lieutenant, I was assigned as a Series Commander in a recruit training company at Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, South Carolina. There were thirteen drill instructors and three hundred sixty recruits serving under me. There is no question that most, if not all, of those drill instructors were better Marines than I was. Many of them were combat veterans who had served more than twice as long as I had. However, I was the one placed in charge and I was the one that answered up the chain of command if things were not done right. The relationship was one based on role, not ability. As we look at the Father-Son relationship in the Godhead we see that the Son has willingly placed himself in subjection to the Father.

And he went forward a little, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. - (Matthew 26:39)

6. who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7. but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; 8. and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient [even] unto death, yea, the death of the cross. - (Philippians 2:6-8)

From here, let's move on to prophecies of Jesus. There are more than 350 Old Testament prophecies fulfilled by Jesus. Here we will focus on selected prophecies concerning his birth, work, death, and resurrection. The first prophecy of Jesus is found in Genesis 3:15.

...and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. - (Genesis 3:15)

This scripture actually gives us two prophecies about Jesus. The first is that he would be the “seed of woman.” This means he would not have a human male as a father. We see this prophecy fulfilled in Matthew 1:20 when the angel of the Lord told Joseph that the child conceived in Mary was of the Holy Spirit. The virgin birth is also prophesied in Isaiah 7:14. The second prophecy is that the seed of woman would bruise the head of the serpent’s seed. I believe Hebrews 2:14 shows this prophecy fulfilled declaring that Jesus had “brought to nought” or defeated the devil by His resurrection.

A second prophecy of Jesus’ birth is that He would be from the tribe of Judah. As Israel was blessing his sons he said this:

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh (the Messiah)³ come: And unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be. - (Genesis 49:10)

We see this prophecy fulfilled in Matthew 1:2-3 and in Luke 3:33.

A third prophecy concerning Jesus’ birth is that he would be born in Bethlehem.

But thou, Beth-lehem Ephrathah, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting. - (Micah 5:2)

Now, let’s examine some of the prophecies of Jesus’ work. The first one we will look at is found in Deuteronomy 18:18.

I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. - (Deuteronomy 18:18)

We see this prophecy fulfilled numerous places in the Gospels. A prophet was one who spoke the word of God. Everything that Jesus taught was from God. We see specific examples of the fulfillment of this prophecy in John 14:10 and John 14:24. Hebrews 1:2 also states Jesus’ role as prophet.

...hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in [his] Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds; - (Hebrews 1:2)

It is important for us to understand that in these last days, Jesus is God’s only spokesman. He has taken the word God gave Him and given that word to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit in turn has taken the word from Jesus and given it to the New Testament writers. The way God speaks to us today is through His written word revealed to the New Testament writers by the Holy Spirit.

A second role prophesied Jesus, the Messiah, is that he would be a priest; not a priest like Aaron, but a priest after the order of Melchizedek.

The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, “You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.” - (Psalms 110:4)

11. Now if there was perfection through the Levitical priesthood (for under it hath the people received the law), what further need [was there] that another priest should arise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be reckoned after the order of Aaron? 12. For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. 13. For he of whom these things are said belongeth to another tribe, from which no man hath given attendance at the altar. 14. For it is evident that our Lord hath sprung out of Judah; as to which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests. 15. And [what we say] is yet more abundantly evident, if after the likeness of Melchizedek there ariseth another priest, 16. who hath been made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life: 17. for it is witnessed [of him,] Thou art a priest for ever After the order of Melchizedek. - (Hebrews 7:11-17)

The priesthood of Jesus is extremely important to because as the Old Testament priest continually offered the blood of animals for their sins and the sins and the sins of the people, Jesus offered His own blood once, for our sins. Since He was sinless He had no need to offer a sacrifice for His own sins. His priesthood is unique in that He served both as the priest and the sacrifice.

The third role the son would fulfill as the Messiah or Christ is that of King. God clearly stated the time when the Kingdom would be established when He spoke to King Nebuchadnezzar in a dream in Daniel 2:31-44. Verses 40-44 are quoted below.

40. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron, forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things; and as iron that crusheth all these, shall it break in pieces and crush. 41. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. 42. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. 43. And whereas thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men; but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron doth not mingle with clay. 44. And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. - (Daniel 2:40-44)

Jesus confirmed his role as King when He told Pilate in John 18:36 that His Kingdom was not of this world. John confirms fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus as King when he applies Zechariah 9:9 to Jesus in John 12:14-15.

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy king cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt the foal of an ass. - (Zechariah 9:9)

14. And Jesus, having found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, 15. Fear not, daughter of Zion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt. - (John 12:14-15)

Having seen how the Son of God fulfilled the roles of Prophet, Priest, and King in scripture, let's move on and talk about His life on earth. We will divide the time Jesus spent on earth as follows: birth, infancy, and adolescence; beginning of His ministry; His Galilean ministry; His Judean and Perea Ministry; His last week of work at Jerusalem; His resurrection through His Ascension. We have neither the time nor the space to cover everything written, so instead we will concentrate on specific lessons from each period.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, as prophesied, of a virgin, as prophesied. His birth was announced to shepherds by an angelic host. The Magi from the East announced His birth to Herod. In an attempt to eliminate a rival king, Herod had all male children under two years old killed. God had warned Joseph in a dream, and he fled to Egypt with Mary and Jesus. Joseph remained in Egypt with his family until Herod had died. He then brought Mary and Jesus back from Egypt fulfilling the prophecy of Hosea 11:1, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt."

Joseph and Mary, in obedience to the law of Moses, took Jesus to be circumcised when He was eight days old. Luke 2:25-35 records Simeon's testimony that Jesus is the Christ. Luke 36-38 records Anna's testimony of Jesus as the redeemer.

The scriptures contain one account from Jesus' adolescence. Luke 2:41-50 record the time when His parents went to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Jesus was twelve years old. They started home thinking Jesus was somewhere in the group of extended family. When they had not found Him after a day they returned to Jerusalem and found Him in the temple. Luke 2:46-50 records what transpired.

46. And it came to pass, after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both hearing them, and asking them questions: 47. and all that heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. 48. And when they saw him, they were astonished; and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing. 49. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house? 50. And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. - (Luke 2:46-50)

Luke 2:51-52 records that Jesus returned to Nazareth with His parents and was subject to them. This passage also records that He grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.

The beginning of Jesus ministry is recorded in: Matthew 3:13-4:1-11, Mark 1:9-13, Luke 3:21-4:13, and John 1:29-4:45. The events of this period include the baptism of Jesus, the temptation of Jesus, calling the first disciples, His first miracle, the first cleansing of the temple, His reception at Jerusalem, teaching Nicodemus about the second birth, simultaneous teaching with John, departure for Galilee, the Samaritan woman, and return to Galilee.

Although space is limited we will discuss several of these events in more detail. First, as we have already noted, at the time of His baptism, God acknowledged Him as His beloved Son. The accounts in Matthew, Mark and Luke are almost identical. John's account does not specifically address Jesus' baptism but records God's revelation to John that Jesus was the anointed one.

The next event from this period we will discuss is Jesus' first cleansing of the temple, recorded in John 2:13-22. Jesus could not tolerate the use of His Father's house as a place for making money. As we think about the account of one man, Jesus, driving many money changers and livestock sellers out of the temple, there must have been something about his presence that kept them from resisting or retaliating. In response to the Jew's request for a sign, Jesus told them that if they destroyed this temple (of His body) He would raise it in three days.

Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus teaches us more about our salvation. Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:3 that one must be born again to enter the kingdom of God. Jesus goes on to say in John 3:5 that one must be born of water and the Spirit. I believe the Spirit and the water correspond to the spiritual and physical aspects of our salvation. The Spirit is the Holy Spirit working on our hearts through the word, causing us to believe, repent, and confess. The water is the physical act of being immersed into Christ.

Finally, the account of the Samaritan woman teaches at least one important lesson. God requires us to worship Him "in spirit and in truth." In other words, we must worship God as He has directed. This is to say that not all worship is acceptable to God but only that which He has directed in His word.

Jesus' Galilean ministry occupies a significant part of the Gospels, Matthew 4:12-13:52, Mark 1:14-9:50, Luke 4:16-9:50, John 4:43-54, and John 6:1-71. It was during this period that Jesus preached what came to be known as "The Sermon on the Mount." Why is this sermon important to us? In it Jesus preached what the will of God really was in contrast to the rule-keeping mentality of the Pharisees. He taught that our religion must be from the heart, not just adherence to a set of rules and rituals.

A second event we will discuss from this period is found in Matthew 11:2-19 and Luke 7:18-35. From prison, John sent disciples to ask Jesus if He was the "Expected One" or should they look for someone else. The way Jesus answered the question is vitally important to us. He told them to report to John the things that they had seen Him do, restore sight to the blind, heal the lame, cleanse the lepers, restore hearing to the deaf, and preach the gospel to the poor. They could examine the scriptures and see that all of these were marks of the Messiah. (Isaiah 35:5-6, 61:1)

The next event from Jesus' Galilean ministry we will consider is Peter's confession found Matthew 16:13-20, Mark 8:27-30, and Luke 9:18-21. Jesus asked His disciples who the people said He was. They answered John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the old prophets. Jesus then asked them who did they say that He was. Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the loving God." What Jesus said to Peter next is only recorded by Matthew.

17. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. 18. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. - (Matthew 16:17-18)

It is important for us to understand what the Lord is saying here in order to counter the false teaching that Peter is the rock on which Jesus will build His church. The word for Peter is Petros. Strong defines

this word as a piece of rock. The word is masculine in gender. The word rock is *petra*. Strong defines this word as a mass of rock. This word is feminine in gender. Knowing this, we can see that Peter is not the rock on which Christ will build His church. If Peter is not the rock on which Christ will build His church, what is? The Apostle Paul answers the question in 1 Corinthians 3:11, “For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

The final event in the Galilean ministry we will cover is the transfiguration. This event is described in Matthew 17:1-9, Mark 9:2-23, and Luke 9:28-36. Matthew’s account is below.

1. And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart: 2. and he was transfigured before them; and his face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as the light. 3. And behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with him. 4. And Peter answered, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, I will make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah. 5. While he was yet speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. 6. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. 7. And Jesus came and touched them and said, Arise, and be not afraid. 8. And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one, save Jesus only. 9. And as they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen from the dead. - (Matthew 17:1-9)

The lesson in this passage is vitally important to us today. The fact that Jesus remained after Moses and Elijah had gone and the fact that the voice from heaven said, “...hear ye Him” teach us that Jesus is now our source of authority. While the Old Testament is still valuable to us for the many examples it contains, it is no longer our source of doctrine. As Hebrews 1:1 tells us, “1. God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, 2. hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in [his] Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds.”

Jesus’ last Judean and Perean ministries are found in Matthew 19:1-20:28, Mark 10:1-52, Luke 10:1-19:27, and John 7:2-12:11. The first event we will cover from this period is the healing of a man who was born blind. This is one of my favorite passages because when I read it I see a friend of mine who was blind and I definitely hear his voice answering the Pharisees’ questions. Let’s summarize the story. Jesus’ disciples saw a blind man and asked whether it was the man’s sins or the parents’ sins which caused him to be blind. Jesus answered, “neither.” It is so that the works of God may be revealed in Him. Jesus anointed the man’s eyes with clay and told him to wash in the pool of Siloam. The man went, washed, and came back seeing. The Pharisees questioned his parents, questioned him, argued with him, and eventually cast him out. There are two lessons we need to learn here. The first is found in verse 3. A physical problem, a misfortune, or even a tragedy is not necessarily the result of sin. In this case the man was born blind so that God would be glorified. The second lesson is found in verse 31 when the man says, “We know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and do his will, him he heareth.” What the man said was accurately recorded, but it was not true. God does hear sinners; otherwise He would not hear us. The fact that God hears sinners is confirmed by the word spoken to Cornelius in Acts 10:31, “...Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.” To determine whether or not something said is true, we must know who is speaking and the context.

The next passage from this period we will consider is found in John 10:1-21. The lessons for us to consider here are found in verses 9 and 11. In verse 9, Jesus says, “I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and go out and shall find pasture.” The lesson here is the same as that found in Acts 4:12. Salvation is only found in Jesus. The next lesson is in verse 11. Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep.” This is how Jesus is able to save us; He has given His life as a sacrifice for our sins.

The third lesson from Jesus’ final Judean-Perean ministry we will consider is the parable of the laborers of the eleventh hour. This parable is found only in the Gospel of Matthew, 20:1-16. As the parable

begins, the land owner had gone out, hired laborers, agreed on a wage, and sent them to his fields to work. He continued to go back during the day to hire additional laborers. When the workday was over, he began to pay the laborers. When those hired last received the same wage as those hired first, the ones hired first complained. The landowner explained that he had done them no wrong. He had paid them the wage they agreed on and if he wanted to pay others the same wage that was his business. I believe we learn two lessons from this parable. One lesson applies to Christians converted out of Judaism. They should not complain against the “last hires”, gentile Christians. The second lesson is closer to home. Those of us who have been Christians for a long time must not be envious of those converted close to the end of life. We should be looking at it not as having to work longer but as having received the spiritual blessings of living a Christian life longer. We learn the same lesson from the words of the father to the brother of the prodigal son in Luke 15:31 “And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that is mine is thine.”

Jesus final week of work at Jerusalem is recorded in Matthew 21:1-27:68, Mark 11:1-15:47, Luke 19:28-23:56, and John 12:12-19:42. The first lesson from this period is found in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. This is another parable found only in Matthew’s Gospel, 25:1-13. Ten virgins were waiting for the bridegroom. Five were wise and five were foolish. The wise had extra oil. While the foolish were out buying oil, the bridegroom came. The wise went in to the wedding feast, and the foolish were shut out. We find the lesson in 25:13, “Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour.” The lesson for us is simple. We must be prepared. Our lives will end one of two ways. Either we will die, or the Lord will return. We do not know when either will take place. Either way we must be ready.

The second lesson for us is Peter’s denial. In Matthew 26:35, Mark 14:31, Luke 22:33, John 13:37 Peter brashly declared that he was willing to die with the Lord. When challenged, however, Peter denied the Lord three times. The lesson for us is no matter how strong we think we are, we can always fall. We must learn to rely on God’s strength, not our own. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:12, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

The third lesson from this period is Jesus’ actual death. The Savior’s death is recorded in Matthew 27:45-50, Mark 15:37-39, Luke 23:44-46, and John 19:28-30. It was common for men crucified to linger on the cross for several days.⁵ Jesus died on His own terms as He said He would in John 10:17-18, “17. Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. 18. No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment received I from my Father.” When Jesus’ work was finished He gave up His spirit and returned to the Father. In John 19:30 we read, “When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit.” There is no doubt that the spectators were surprised at how quickly He died. His death caused the Roman centurion supervising the crucifixion to exclaim, “... Truly this man was the Son of God.” - (Mark 15:39)

Resurrection through ascension is covered in Matthew 28:1-20, Mark 16:1-20, Luke 24:1-53, John 20:1-21:25, Acts 1:1-11, and 1 Corinthians 15:4-9. First, we will discuss the reinstatement of Peter. This is found only in the Gospel of John.

15. So when they had broken their fast, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son. of John, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. 16. He saith to him again a second time, Simon, son. of John, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Tend my sheep. 17. He saith unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. 18. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. - (John 21:15-18)

The most important lesson we can draw from this passage is that Jesus forgave Peter even after Peter had denied Him three times. We serve a God who will forgive us as often as we repent and return to

Him.

The next lesson we will consider is from Acts 1:10-11.

And while they were looking stedfastly into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 11. who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? this Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven. - (Acts 1:10-11)

Hopefully I am not taking a lesson from this passage out of context. Here, I believe the Holy Spirit is teaching us not to stand around. We have important work to do, and we need to get busy. The passage also teaches that Jesus will return the same way He ascended.

Our final lesson comes from 1 Corinthians 15:5-9.

5. and that he appeared to Cephas; then to the twelve; 6. then he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain until now, but some are fallen asleep; 7. then he appeared to James; then to all the apostles; 8. and last of all, as to the child. untimely born, he appeared to me also. 9. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. - (1 Corinthians 15:4-9)

The lesson here is an extension of the lesson from John 21:15-18. In that passage, Jesus forgave Peter for denying Him and put him to work. In this passage, Jesus forgives Paul for persecuting Him (by persecuting the church) and puts him to work. The lesson whatever we have done, the blood of Jesus is able to wash away our sins. After we are forgiven, God will enable us to do useful work in His kingdom.

I will end with a note of exhortation. If you've made it to the bottom of this lecture, you are most likely a serious student of scripture. I encourage you to continue your efforts. May God bless you.

End Notes

¹Marion Fox, *The Work of the Holy Spirit, Volume I* (Oklahoma City: 5 F Publishing, 2003) 38.

²Ibid. 51

³James Burton Coffman's Commentary on the Old Testament, Genesis 49:10. <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=0&ch=49>

⁴James Strong, *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek New Testament* (Nashville, Abdington Press, 1890) 57

⁵Roman Crucifixion, Death by Crucifixion, <http://www.tribunesandtriumphs.org/roman-life/roman-crucifixion.htm>

The Plan of Salvation

Willard Cox



WILLARD COX was born in Florence, AL, August 10, 1929. He and Yvonne were married on December 21, 1951 and they have five children: Ronald, Donald, Gerald, Sharon (Smith), and Curtis.

Willard has preached over 60 years. More than any other speaker on our lectureship! He has preached in the following states: Alabama, Florida, Texas, Oklahoma, Missouri, and North Carolina. He has had meetings and spoke on lectureships in the following states: New Mexico, Tennessee, Wisconsin, Colorado, and Oklahoma. He retired from local preaching a few years ago. Willard also served the Barnes church of Christ from 1994 - 1999, sharing the preaching with Marion Fox for a number of years. While here he taught in the "Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies" while working with the Barnes church. He and Yvonne are dearly loved by the members of the Barnes church! He has written articles appearing in "House to House, Heart to Heart."

NOTE OF INTEREST: Willard taught 55 lessons on the Life of Christ, teaching nearly every week for 14 months.

Eph. 5:14; Rom. 13:11; I Cor. 15:34

1. God's plan of man's salvation from sin is made known only in the Bible, as it is revealed in the Gospel of Christ in the New Testament. Consider these verses.

Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

Hebrews 5:8,9: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."

Ephesians 1:13: "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of Promise."

Acts 4:12: "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, where by we must be saved."

2 Timothy 2:10: "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."

2 Corinthians 6:2: "For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee; behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation."

With this introduction concerning salvation from sin, and that it is found only in the Gospel of Christ as it is taught in the New Testament, it is essential that we go back to the beginning to see the relationship of man with God as Man's Creator.

After God had created the heavens and the earth, it was without form, and void, and darkness covered the earth, On the first day God created light. "God is light, and in Him is not darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). In the next few days of that first week, God created the firmament, with waters above and below it. In the firmament God made two great lights: The greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night, and He made the stars also. God also divided the waters under the firmament into places of dry land and seas. God next caused grass to grow on the land and many other kinds of plants, including herbs and fruit trees whose seed is in itself. God created the birds of the sky, the fish of the sea, and all the animals of the land and last of all He created man. "God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping

thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created He them” (Gen. 1:26, 27). More is said about man’s creation in Genesis 2:20-24, “...but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept, and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof, And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” (v, 24)

The human beings which God created were different from the plants, the animals, and the other things that God had created. The first man, Adam, and the first woman, Eve, were made in the image of God. They, as human beings, were superior in nature and are able to have dominion over the animals. In a special way God breathed into the nostrils of the first man, Adam, and man became a living soul. (Gen. 2:7). Man was like God in some ways. He could talk and communicate with God, Man could understand much about God, his Creator, Man could think, remember, learn God’s teaching, and make choices. Man was and is, a free moral agent, and he can understand God, and obey Him. God wanted Adam and Eve to be like Him, to love Him, worship Him, obey Him, and God continues to want all people to praise Him, thank Him and obey Him. God deserves our honor and obedience; He is our Creator, our Provider, and He helps us in many ways. God loves His human beings, each one of us. He cares for us (Matt. 7:7-11; Acts 17:28; James 1:17-19). Yes God tests us, He gives us work to do, adversities to overcome, and commands to obey.

“And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:8, 9), “And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.” (v. 15) “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying Of every tree in the garden thou mayest freely eat; But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (vs. 16, 17)

Some time later, we are told of the first sin (Gen. 3:1-6). “The serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die; For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also to her husband with her, and he did eat” (Gen. 3:1-6)

The Bible continues in this context to tell us more about this sin of our first parents.

The eyes of both Adam and Eve were then opened, and when they knew they were naked, they sewed fig leaves together for aprons. When they heard the voice of God in the garden, they hid themselves. God asked Adam “Where art thou?” Adam answered, “I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself” (Gen. 3:10). When God asked Adam had he eaten from the tree which God had commanded him not to eat, Adam said the woman whom God had given to him gave him fruit thereof, and he said he ate it. When God asked Eve about it, she told God, “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.” God then said to the serpent, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed, it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen. 3:15).

This great statement of God is the first prophecy of the coming of Jesus whom God sent to earth to pay the debt of man’s sin. It also shows the nature of the devil, and his opposition to God and human beings. See John 8:44. Sin, man’s disobedience of God, and His Word, is man’s largest problem.

Sin is defined in the Bible: “Whosoever committeth sin also transgresseth the law, for sin is the trans-

gression of the law” (1John 3:4). This is what Adam and Eve did. They transgressed (went beyond the limit, broke) God’s law when they ate the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:16, 17). They did what God told them not to do. Sin is also defined: “... to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17). From these two verses, we can see that Sin Is Doing something that God has commanded us Not to do, and Sin is also, Not Doing something which God Has told us to Do. Cain, the first son of Adam and Eve, sinned when he did Not offer the Kind of sacrifice which God told him to offer (Gen. 4:5; Heb. 11:4; Rom. 10:17) The word “sin” is translated from the Greek word, “hamartia”, which means “a missing of the mark” (W. E. Vine.)

Sin separates man from God. When Adam and Even sinned, God “sent”, “drove” them from the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:23, 24). The first time the word “sin” appears in the Bible is when God said to Cain here in Genesis 4:7. “Why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door”. Later when Cain and Abel were in the field, “Cain rose up against Abel his brother and slew him” (Gen. 4:8). God said to Cain, “What hast thou done,? The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground, and now art thou cursed from the earth...When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth...And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid...” (Gen. 4:10-14). The sins of man bring grief to God. He is righteous, pure, and holy, and our sins separate us from Him. The prophet, Isaiah wrote: “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear” (Isa. 59:2). Those who live their lives with a failure to follow the teachings of Jesus (Matt. 7:21-23), and those who fail to obey the Gospel to have their sins forgiven (2 Thess. 1:5-8) need to hear what Jesus taught, “Depart from me, I never knew you”. Eternal separation from Jesus is something no one should ever want. Let’s be wise and obey Him now, before it is too late (Matt. 7:24-26, see also Matt. 28:20).

By Divine inspiration (2 Tim. 3:16, 17), Paul wrote, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). John wrote: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” (1 John 1:8) “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us” (1 John 1:10). These verses about our sins do not teach that all of us, or any of us, inherit the guilt of sin from the sin of Adam and Eve when we were born. In Ezekiel, the Bible teaches; “The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him” (Ezek. 18:20). Also the Bible teaches: “So then every one of us shall give account of himself unto God” (Rom. 14:12).

Our first parents, Adam and Eve, sinned by disobeying God in eating the forbidden fruit from of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Their first son, Cain, did not please God when he did not bring the offering from the fruit of the ground (Gen. 4:4-6) to God by faith (Heb. 11:4). In so doing, Cain sinned, and later God talked to him about it (Gen. 4:6, 7). Then Cain talked to his brother, Abel, and it came to pass that when they were in the field, Cain rose up and slew Abel (Gen. 4:8). It may have been God’s desire for Cain, as the older brother, to be a good example and leader for Abel (Gen. 6:8), but if that were God’s desire, Cain did not want to live up to God’s desire as seen in his question to God: “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Gen. 4:7). “And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod” (Gen. 4:16).

Before the flood, few men were righteous and faithful to God. Abel, who by faith offered to God a more excellent sacrifice by which he bore witness that he was righteous (Heb. 11:4). After Cain had killed Abel, Adam and Eve had their third son whom they named him Seth, who became the father of “Enos: then began men to call on the name of the Lord” (Gen. 4:26). Enoch, a son of Jared, and the father of Methuselah, was a man who “walked with God” (Gen. 5:24), and he “was translated that he should not see death” (Heb. 11:5). “Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God.” (Gen. 6:9).

However, during this time, wickedness and ungodliness became more and more to cover the earth. Genesis 6:5 tells us: “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart” (Gen. 6:5, 6).

“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” Noah was a just man, and he walked with God (Gen, 6:8, 9). “And God said unto Noah, The end of flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth, Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch and this is the fashion which thou shalt make it...” (Gen. 6:14-16).

God then told Noah specifically the length, width and height of the ark. It was to have rooms, 3 stories, a door, and a window, in their special places, etc. “Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he” (Gen. 6:22). After Noah finished building the ark, God told Noah to enter the ark, his wife, his sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and each one’s wife. Many clean animals and several unclean animals of all flesh entered the ark by two of: male and female. After seven days in the ark God caused it to rain. With Noah’s family, and with God’s number of clean and unclean animals inside the ark, God closed the door,” Shut him in”, (Gen. 7:8-16). For forty days and forty nights the rain came on the earth. The fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. All the high hills under the whole heaven were covered fifteen cubits upward with water. The ark was lifted up as the waters rose, and later it rested on the mountains of Ararat.

Noah sent out a raven, and twice he sent out a dove. When the dove returned the second time, it had an olive leaf in its mouth, and Noah knew they would be out of the ark soon (Gen. 8:7-12). The ark rested on the mountains of Ararat, the ground dried, and they all came out of the ark. All the animals, and all the people (“every living substance” - Gen. 7:23) on the earth outside the ark were killed, destroyed, in the flood (Gen. 7:23). In the ark all eight of the members of Noah’s family survived the flood (Gen. 7:23). They were in the ark about a year and ten days (Compare Gen. 7:11, and Gen, 8:13, 14). One of the great principles we can learn about God and the universal flood and what it did, is that God hates sin, and disobedience of His word. (See Psalm 119:104, 128; Proverbs 6:16-19). All mankind needs to learn this lesson and always obey God’s word. After the flood, God put a rainbow in the sky, and He told Noah it would remind mankind in future generations of His promise to never destroy the earth again by a flood (Gen. 9:11-17).

God blessed Noah and his family. He told them to multiply and to replenish the earth. God spoke to Noah of the animals, and gave orders that whosoever sheds a man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in God’s image. God told Noah several other things. From the three sons of Noah and their wives, many children were born in the next few generations. From them the population of the earth grew rapidly, especially in the plain of Shinar, and the people had one language. They started to build a tower there, so they would not be scattered, but God wanted them to scatter and fill the earth, so He confounded their language and people did not build a tower, but a city, Babel, and from this city people who talked alike began to group together in various places on the earth (Gen. 11:1-9). Through the lineage of Seth, the third son of Adam and Eve, Shem was born (Gen. 10:21-25) and through the lineage of Shem the son of Noah, Abram (Abraham) was born (Gen. 11:26). God said to him I will make of thee a great nation, and in thee all nations of the earth will be blessed (Gen. 12:2, 3; 18:18; Gal. 3:8, 9).

During this call of Abraham, the people of the earth began again to drift further from God. Sodom and Gomorrah became very wicked. God said “their sin is very grievous” (Gen. 18:20). Abraham prayed to God to spare the city of Sodom if even ten righteous people could be found in it, but not even ten righteous people could be found in it (Gen. 18:32). Lot’s two daughters escaped, but Lot’s wife was turned to a pillar of salt because she disobeyed, and looked back (Gen. 19:17; 26). As time continued, Abraham begat the twelve patriarchs, and from these twelve patriarchs: Reuben... Benjamin, God made the great nation of Israel.

When the older sons came to dislike Joseph, they sold him, and Joseph eventually was brought to

Egypt. Joseph obeyed God, did what was right (Gen. 39:9); ect.), and God was with him, and gave to Joseph the wisdom to interpret Pharaoh's dream. After Joseph interpreted the dream, Pharaoh, prepared Egypt for a bountiful harvest, and he chose Joseph to be the governor of Egypt (Gen. 41:35, 36). All the other nations had a famine, too (Gen. 41:57), so Jacob sent his ten older sons to Egypt to buy food. Joseph knew his brothers, but he did not make himself known to them, so he left Simeon in Egypt (Gen. 42:24), and he required of them that when they return for more food, be sure to bring their youngest brother with them to prove they are not spies (Gen. 42:16,20). Joseph's brothers did bring Benjamin, the youngest brother back, and they all rejoiced to be together again, and Joseph forgave his brothers on how they had earlier mistreated him. Eventually all Jacob's family, sixty-six of them (Gen. 46:26), plus Joseph's family of four made seventy in Egypt (Gen. 46:27), and they lived in Goshen (v. 28). Soon Jacob (Israel) died, and later Joseph died, and the children and grandchildren multiplied rapidly (Ex. 1:8), and Jacob's family (Israelites) was beginning to become a nation.

"Now there arose up a new king over Egypt that knew not Joseph (Ex. 1:8). The Israelites (descendants of Jacob) became slaves in Egypt (Ex. 1:14). The taskmasters afflicted the Israelites with more burdens and made their lives bitter. The king made the rule that the midwives were to kill the boy babies of the Israelite women when they were born (Ex. 1:16). Moses was born during this rule, and instead of killing her baby son, Moses, his mother, Jochebed, hid him in the bulrushes, near the river's bank (Ex. 2:3). He was found by Pharaoh's daughter, and was brought up in Pharaoh's palace by his mother (vs. 4-10). "By faith Moses, when he had come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt:...by faith he forsook Egypt" (Heb. 11:24-36). To make good history more brief, Moses, after ten plagues had come upon the Egyptians, led the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage, through the wilderness for forty years, and across the Jordan river into the land of promise that God had made to Abraham and his seed. In the wilderness these children of Israel had a close relationship with God. He performed many miracles for them, gave them His Law, the Ten Commandments,(Ex. 20:3-17).

Man, cannot by himself save himself from his sins. Jeremiah 10:23 says"...the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps". "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." (Pro. 14:12). Each and every individual is a composition of an outward body or flesh, and an inward mind or soul. The Bible says: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and Spirit against the flesh; these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. 5:17). Every person needs help. Just as sure a sheep needs a shepherd to help them in their battles, man needs his Creator to be his Lord to help him. David said "the Lord is my Shepherd" (Pslam 23:1). The corruption, sins, disobedience, etc. that were seen in earliest periods of man's life on earth, shows that man needs help if he wants to live in eternal comfort, joy, peace, etc.

What would God do with sinful man? Would God immediately destroy man, and do nothing about man's sins? No! Would God remove man from being a free moral agent, and make some people to always do right, so they could be destined to heaven, and also make other people to do wrong, and be destined to hell? No! These attitudes are not a part of God's nature. "God created man in his own image" (Gen. 1:27). God loves man. Man, the human being, is the only part of all God's creation that is said to be created in God's image. Man could think, reason, plan ahead, choose, etc. Man has an eternal soul. Our God, the Creator of the world and everything in it (Acts 17:24), is holy, pure, righteous, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, eternal, etc. God is also rich in mercy and grace. The Bible says, "God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace are ye saved;), And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:4-7). The word "grace", as used here in the Bible is defined as "an unmerited favor from God". "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: Not of works lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9). God loves us, every person on earth.

God wants us to choose Him, obey Him, and please Him in all we do so we may live forever with Him in heaven. Each person must accept God's gift of grace by obeying His plan of salvation. No one should ever use God's grace to intentionally commit more and more sins. This is what some people were doing here in Jude 4: "ungodly men, turning the grace of God in lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ". Others had the idea: "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" (Rom. 6:1). Verse 2 says "God forbid". God had a plan for man to be saved from sin.

"God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). "For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). God had a plan for man's salvation from sin to give every person the opportunity to obey God's plan, and be forgiven of his sins. God's plan was to forgive man of his sins, by his obedience to the Gospel of Christ.

The first reference to God's plan of salvation from sin is in Genesis 3:15, where God is talking to the serpent (probably the devil through a serpent): "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel", The word "seed" (singular) here surely refers to Jesus, as is seen in Galatians 3:16:

"Now to Abraham and His seed we see the promises made. He saith not, And to thy seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed which is Christ". Isaiah had prophesied; "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emanuel (Isa. 7:14). In Luke 1:27-38, and Luke 2:1-52, we can read about the birth of Jesus, and His early life to twelve years old, and His four-way growth. Jesus, the Son of God, (Matt. 3:16,17; 17:5; 2 Peter 1:17), went about doing good (Acts 10:38), healing the sick, raising the dead, and teaching many Parables, ethical and spiritual lessons in His Sermon on the Mount, (Matt. 5-7). He told His apostles to go into all the world and preach the Gospel, and the way of salvation to every creature (Mark 16:15, 16). No man ever spoke like Jesus spoke (John 7:46). Jesus was tempted in all points like we are, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22). Jesus was qualified in every way to die for our sins. He did not die for His own sins; Jesus died for the sins of all people. The Bible teaches us that "all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23), and that "the wages of sin is death" (6:23) "Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6). But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (v.8). "...Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1Cor. 15:3). "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him" (1Thes. 5:9,10). Christ's coming into the world to teach us how to live good, moral, and spiritual lives, to be a good example for us to follow Him in righteousness and holiness, and also to live a sinless life here on earth, so He could die, shed His blood for our sins when He was innocently crucified for our sins. This was God's, the Godhead's, part for your and my sins to be forgiven. It is finished. God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit have done their part for our salvation. Now, each individual must do his part to be saved from sin. We must obey the Gospel, and be faithful to God through the remainder of our lives here on earth. Because of God's love for mankind (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8), and because of His grace toward us (Eph. 2:7, 8; Titus 2:11, 12), we can be forgiven, saved from our sins, if we obey the Gospel.

Every grown, normal person must hear, read, and study what the New Testament teaches about salvation from sin so he can know what to do to be saved. Jesus told His apostles: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned". (Mark 16:15,16,nkjv). People begin to be saved from their sins when first, they hear the Gospel, when they listen, pay attention, and learn what the Gospel teaches. Correct hearing is essential. Jesus teaches: "Therefore take heed how you hear" (Luke 8:18,nkjv). Jesus also taught "Take heed what you hear" (Mark 4:24,nkjv). Not everything you and I hear is true, Jesus taught "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves" (Matt. 7:15,nkjv). "Now when they had gone through the island, to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus,..." (Acts 13:6,nkjv). "Ye therefore, brethren, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ” (2Peter 3:17, 18). The Bible, God’s word, is truth. In Christ’s prayer to God, He said “Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth. It is from hearing the Gospel that we can have faith in God. Romans 10:17 teaches us that: “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” This hearing is also accomplished in our reading and studying the New Testament at home, etc. “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2Tim. 2:15;nkjv). Jesus taught: “Search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life: and these are they which testify of me. It is essential that we hear, read, study, learn God’s Word of truth. The Bible teaches against adding things to it, and taking words from it, and tells of the punishments of those who do add things, and who subtract words from it (Rev. 22:18, 19). We must know surely what the Holy Spirit inspired the penmen of the New Testament to write, and then obey those words.

Not only must each individual hear God’s Word, he/she must believe what it teaches, have faith in what is taught is true. When a person hears the Bible, reads, and learns God’s word, he/she must then believe in God, put her faith in Him to obey and live a godly life as the Bible teaches. Hebrews 11:6 teaches: “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” Hebrews 11:1 defines the word “faith” for us: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”. Faith in God and belief in God are alike and can have the same meaning. “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness”

(Rom. 4:3). And “we can say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness” (v.9). We can understand that when a person “believes” (a verb) in God, he has “faith” (a noun) in God. This faith or belief in God is our trust and confidence that God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit do exist, and live and help us in many ways, and they want to help you and me to live a righteous life, and to prepare to live with them in heaven forever. The Bible, the New Testament is the only book that tells us of God’s plan for our salvation. The Bible is true and complete (2 Tim. 3:15-17). Jesus has all authority to tell mankind what to do to be saved.(Matt. 28:18-20 asv) That leaves no authority for anyone else. Even though we do not see Him, we have enough evidence to believe, or have faith that God lives and that all His Word is true. Jesus said: “If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). We can depend upon God to tell us what we must do to be saved. Faith in God is essential for every individual, so he/she can be saved from sin. “This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.” (1 John 5:4). We are told: “...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10).

Every person must obey the command to repent of his/her sins to be saved. “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained ;...”(Acts 17:30, 31). “The lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9). Repentance is brought about by godly sorrow. “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation...” (2Cor. 7:10), and is followed by good works: “...that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance” (Acts 26:20). Yes, repentance is the decision, the resolution, to stop living a sinful life of Satan, and start being a Christian, and being faithful to God. Paul asks this question: “...or despises thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” (Rom. 2:4). Jesus taught: “I tell you, Nay but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3).

There is also a fourth thing a person must do to have the salvation that Jesus prepared for us in His death on the cross: “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 10:32, 33). Some people in those days believed Jesus was the Christ, but they would not confess this belief before men, lest they be put out of the synagogue. (John 9:22). Jesus also said: “Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when

he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels." (Luke 9:26).

After Philip preached Jesus unto the Ethiopian eunuch, as they rode along in a chariot, they came to a certain water and the eunuch asked Philip, "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" Philip said, "If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest". The eunuch said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God". Philip stopped the chariot near the water, and they both got out, went down into the water, and Philip baptized the eunuch, and after they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip", and the eunuch went on his way rejoicing, and he saw Philip no more (Acts 8:35-39).

After a person hears or learns the gospel of Christ, believes it and puts his faith in Christ, repents of his sins, confesses his faith openly and not ashamed of Christ, he must then be baptized into Christ for the remission of his sins.

Jesus gave the great commission: "Go ye into the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:15, 16). Notice what Peter told the people who had crucified Jesus. Peter said unto them "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). A person must be baptized in the name of, by the authority of, Jesus Christ. You and I must be baptized for the purpose of receiving the remission, the forgiveness, of our sins. In so doing, each person will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. When a person is thus baptized, he/she is immersed in water: "buried with him in baptism" (Col. 2:12). When a person is baptized as the Bible teaches (Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 2:38, ect.), he/she is "baptized into Jesus Christ" (Gal. 3:27). "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3,4). A person's forgiveness must come after his baptism of sins, not before his baptism. A person's new life begins when he is baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of sins. He/she is added to the church (Acts 2:47), and to the Lord (5:14). People who have obeyed the Gospel of Christ are saved; they have become Christians (Acts 11:26); they received the Holy Spirit into their lives (Acts 2:38; 10:47; 19:2); their names "are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21:27). "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

When Jesus came to this world, He said, "I am the light of the world..." (John 8:12). He is our Savior, our only Savior from sin. Jesus came to earth to die for our sins, to bring man out of darkness, and to give us hope to have better lives, and to live with Him in heaven after we die here on earth, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1John 1:7). Jesus had told his disciples: "Ye are the light of the world." (Matt 5:14). Jesus died for us, to save us from sin and to give us hope to have better lives, and to live with Him in heaven, after we die. People could see His works, and understand His teaching. Jesus said, "Whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness" (John 12:46). He told his disciples: "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). He also said to those who live by His teaching, "Ye are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14) We, as Christians today, should never walk in darkness, nor even let our light burn low. Let's teach and encourage our relatives, neighbors, friends and foreigners to obey God's Plan of Salvation so they can go to heaven.

Living Faithfully

Brian Berry



BRIAN BERRY was born November 11, 1962, in Hobart, OK. He has attended Oklahoma Christian University from which he graduated and Bear Valley Bible Institute, Denver, CO, from which he also graduated.

Brian and Susan were married December 20, 2014 and between them they have five children: Brandon, McKennah, Ethan, Micah, and Dylan.

He started preaching in 1991 and has done local work with the following congregations: Moore, OK; Paden, OK; Erick, OK; and is now working the Sycamore church of Christ in Cookeville, TN. He has preached in gospel meetings and lectureships with the Edmond church of Christ Vacation Bible School Adult Series Lectures; Bear Valley Institute Homecoming Lectures, Denver, CO; Edmond church of Christ; Prague, OK; Leedey, OK Summer Series; Erick, OK; Carnegie, OK Summer Youth Series; Mountain View, OK church growth Seminar. He has written articles appearing in the local newspaper in Sayre, Oklahoma Record.

This is Brian's first time to speak on our lectureship.

Worship: In Exodus 3 when Moses encountered Almighty God at the bush that was on fire but was not consumed, he was told in no uncertain terms, *"Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground"* (v. 5). Thus, any study that takes into account the worship of the omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient one and only true and living God should commence with man removing his shoes for we are "standing on holy ground." Sounds awesome ! It is and the rewards are endless.

As Christians fully lose themselves in our driving force of worship to our Creator, only then do we find true meaning and purpose in discipleship. Our evangelism will be enthusiastic. Our love will be edifying. Our service will be genuinely selfless. When we stand in awe of the God of this universe and in amazement of His glory, we will walk, talk, act, and think like the victors He has crowned us. Anything else will just be a wearisome exercise in just "we ought to." And "we ought to" will not carry us through. Our love and desire will.

Worship is our reverent, heartfelt response to God for what He has already done for us. "We love, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). *"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship"* (Romans 12:1). *"But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers"* (John 4:23). Because of who God is we praise and worship Him. We praise Him for what He does. We worship Him because of who He is.

Two basic principles which must be employed in every aspect of spiritual living: we dare not go beyond what God has authorized in His Word. *"Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other"* (1 Corinthians 4:6). Also, we practice only that which our Lord is authorized by His Word: *"Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father"* (Colossians 3:17). If we understand these, it will be clear what God commands and desires for our lives.

Worship With Powerful Prayer: In writing to the church in Thessalonica, the apostle Paul gives a direct command to them, and being inspired by the Holy Spirit, passes the command on to us today. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says: *"Pray without ceasing."* The opportunity to approach our Creator is one that we simply must indulge in wholeheartedly, never stopping.

Prayer is the avenue through which we can approach our Creator, talk to Him and Him alone, and pour

out our hearts both individually and collectively as His church. When we are faithful, He listens. *“For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and his ears attend to their prayer; but the face of the Lord is against those that do evil.”* (1 Peter 3:12)

Realizing the blessedness of prayer, knowing that Paul has commanded us to pray in frequent intervals, and, most importantly, knowing that Almighty God has established this form of communication, Jesus Christ gave a model prayer. *“Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. ‘Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ‘Give us this day our daily bread. ‘And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ‘And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]’* (Matthew 6:9-13)

We are directly commanded to worship, admire, and adore Almighty God. Even Luke listed prayer as an example of worship in Acts 2:42: *“They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”* All five acts of worship appear explicitly or implicitly in this one verse of the Bible. The Lord also shows us by His example that we need to praise God verbally in our prayers. Jesus said, *“Hollowed by thy name.”* in His model prayer as we *“Pray without ceasing”* (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

We need God more than we can humanly imagine and we must realize this need. Prayer is not for God, but it is for us and for our needs. We need to know that God exists. We need to praise God because man is an instinctively worshipping being. Prayer is an opportunity for righteous Christians to approach the Creator through Christ, according to God’s word. What a blessing !

Worship In Soul-Moving Song: What an honor and privilege to be invited by our Lord to worship ! Even the word speaks reverence as we offer spiritual sacrifices to Him. Our worship in song is not merely a matter of “music.” Perhaps the two most explicit statements regarding our worship in song are Ephesians 5:19, *“speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;”* and Colossians 3:16, *“Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”* God clearly says those who would worship Him in Spirit and Truth are to sing.

The music of congregational singing in the first century church was vocal only. *“A cappella,”* meaning to sing without instrumental accompaniment, comes from Latin for “at church.” Though we find musical instruments mentioned in the Old Testament, there is not a single New Testament reference to anything but vocal music in worship. Historical sources also indicate that instrumental music did not appear in worship until centuries after the church was established.

Let us as His worshippers be satisfied with *“ Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.”* (Hebrews 13:15). In this, we will be mutually edified and instructed as we speak to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. May God be glorified as we lift our voices in song.

Worship In Celebrating The Lord’s Supper: The New Testament commands Christians to partake of the Lord’s Supper. Jesus established it in Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, and Luke 22:14-23. Paul also refers to this in I Corinthians 11:24-25. As often as we eat the Lord’s Supper, we proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes. Thus, it is implied in observing the Lord’s Supper, that we believe that Jesus died according to the eternal purpose of God, that He was raised from the dead, that He ascended to heaven, that He is now King, and that someday He is coming again to call all men into judgment. Following God’s command to observe the Lord’s Supper is one purpose for disciples coming together every first day of the week. *“And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight”* (Acts 20:7).

What a memorial time. Luke 22:19 says, *“And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He*

broke it and gave it to them, saying, “*This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.*” Memorials are natural and universal. Countries and cultures have their own. The Lord’s Supper is also a memorial. Those who partake of it have their minds carried back to that awful night in Gethsemane, to a cruel mob. They remember the morning after Jesus was taken by the soldiers and how he stood before Pilate and Herod and suffered humiliation. They remember the nails that were driven into His hands and feet, and the soldier who pierced His side. And most importantly, they remember the blood which was shed for you and me.

What a proclamation. “*For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes*” (1 Corinthians 11:26). Every Christian who partakes is preaching a powerful lesson in God’s love in the very act of observing the Lord’s Supper. No sermon, however eloquent it may be, can speak as effectively as the entire congregation in joint participation, when faithfully, solemnly, and discerningly observing this sacred meal. This is no mere religious ritual designed to take up time. This is a communion; a sharing in the spiritual benefits and privileges provided by the body and blood of a sinless and perfect Savior.

Worship in life-changing preaching and teaching. When the church gathered together in the first century, they were instructed in the apostles’ doctrine (Acts 2:42). This instruction came in one or both of two forms: preaching and/or the reading of scripture. For an example of preaching, look no further than Acts 20:7. Here Luke records that “*On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.*” Also, Colossians 4:16 is a great example of the reading of Scripture. Paul writes, “*When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea.*”

The reading of Scripture should not be underestimated as a viable and effective means of instruction. To Timothy, the evangelist, Paul wrote, “*Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching*” (1 Timothy 4:13). The words “give attention to” means “to attend” or “give heed.” Notice that there were three areas in which Timothy was to give heed and that each of these build upon the previous. First was reading which included both Old and New Testaments. Based upon that reading was exhortation meaning “*to call a person to one’s side.*” Thus, the exhorter based upon the reading calls the listener to faithfulness and obedience to that which was read. Finally, there is teaching or doctrine which is a direct result of this reading.

One of the most comprehensive passages on preaching is 2 Timothy 4:1-5. “*I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*” Paul, the apostle of Christ, gives a charge to all preachers in the sight of God and Christ who shall judge. This is serious.

Preachers are to herald in the most absolute sense “all Scripture” of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and to “*...speak as the oracles of God*” (1 Peter 4:11). This then is “*the word of faith, which we preach*” (Romans 10:8) and it is the preaching of the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:16).

Paul wrote, “*be ready in season and out of season*” meaning to be ready, stand by, be at hand and take a stand. “*In season,*” when conditions are favorable, and “*out of season,*” when conditions are not favorable. Whatever the circumstances, the gospel preacher must be ready to proclaim, to herald, to preach the message of the King.

Paul gives three means of preaching: “*reprove, rebuke, and exhort.*” Reprove means to bring to proof, convict of errors. Rebuke, a stronger word than reprove, means to chide or charge. It can mean to give honor or blame and it often includes the just recompense of one’s actions. Exhort literally means to call

a person to one's side and, hence, to beseech or entreat. The message is heralded to call all to pursue the proper course of action.

"With great patience and instruction" describes the preacher as he proclaims God's word. He speaks the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Longsuffering can be defined as *"long on suffering."* It is brave steadfast remaining, forbearance, and patience. God is longsuffering toward us (2 Peter 3:9) and we must be toward one another. The content of his message is instruction that is healthy for the soul. *"Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you."*

Sadly a time will come in which some *"will not endure sound doctrine;"* They will not tolerate healthy teaching. In three steps they accumulate to themselves teachers that teach what they want to hear. They turn away their ears from the truth and turn aside to fables. Their desire is for story-telling and not soul-saving, powerful, and plain gospel preaching.

Worship With Freewill Offerings: Freely giving of the resources God has blessed us with presents the opportunity of a lifetime for the church to carry out our soul-saving mission.

One of the most impressive characteristics of the first century church was her generosity and hospitality. From her beginning, we can read of Christian fellowship and common devotion to the apostles doctrine (Acts 2:42). The result of this fellowship in spirit was an unprecedented demonstration of selflessness and sharing. *"And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need"* (Acts 2:44-45). The motivation for this generous giving as described more fully in Acts 4 verse 32, was not one of commandment but one of a loving spirit to a genuine need. *"And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them."*

Truly we can see the love, the compassion, the generosity of the early Christians as they made sacrifices to help other brethren some of whom they had never met. Even today this sacrificial compassion is generated every *"...first day of the week...as he may prosper"* (1 Corinthians 16:2) where people understand the fellowship of the one body in Christ. For the Christian, who has received so much from God, it is a wonderful opportunity to meet the legitimate needs of others, especially the needs of our brethren in Christ. Every church whose work is led by the New Testament can fully fund her efforts only by freewill offerings every first day of the week.

Regarding our worship, let's remember that in our attempts to avoid Scylla, we might run right upon Charybdis. In Greek mythology Scylla, a cliff-dweller, and Charybdis, a dangerous whirlpool, are two sea monsters situated on opposite sides of a narrow channel of water in the strait of Messina between Italy and Sicily, so close that sailors avoiding Charybdis will pass too close to Scylla and vice versa. The phrase "between Scylla and Charybdis" has come to mean being in a state where one is between two dangers and moving away from one will cause one to be in danger of the other, and is believed to be the origin of the phrase "between a rock and a hard place" or literally "between the devil and the deep blue sea." Neither fate was more attractive; both were difficult to overcome. In Homer's Odyssey, Odysseus in his wanderings passed through them; avoiding dealing with both was an impossibility. They stood in his way. His only choice was to navigate a path right between. And veer not to the right or left.

Confession & Repentance: Sin is man's issue. The Bible speaks about sins committed in private and sins committed in public. What attitude does God desire in His children regarding both types of sins. In considering private sins there are two types. First, there are private sins that are known only between the individual and God. When a sin is committed in this manner, confession of this sin is made to God. *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). Once we have repented and made confession to God then the blood of Christ forever erases that sin.

Second, there are private sins where a Christian sins against another Christian. When such a sin is committed, it is to be handled in the most discreet manner possible. When the motivation to handle this situation is love, the sin will be kept in private if at all possible. *“Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins”* (1 Peter 4:8). However, while the ideal is to handle the sin in private, Jesus makes it clear that if the person who has committed the sin refuses to repent, then others become involved. *“If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector”* (Matthew 18:15-17). The process is three steps and concise. First, talk to the person individually and if the problem is resolved, let it go. Second, if the problem is not resolved in a one-on-one encounter, then take two or three more with you so that the matter may be confirmed. If the problem is not resolved, then the third step is to bring it before the church. Once before the church, then the church has the obligation to withdraw fellowship hopefully leading to repentance for the salvation of the soul.

Public sins, of which there are several examples in the Bible, are handled quite differently. In Acts 5:1-11 Scripture reveals the first recorded public sin of Ananias and Sapphira. As the narrative reveals, this couple sold a parcel of land and offered a portion of the sale price to the church. At this point no sin has been committed. The sin was committed when Ananias claimed that they had given the entire sale price of the land to the church. In essence they lied about the amount of money they had given to the church. In a very public way, Peter confronted Ananias about the money. No doubt, Peter’s desire was to give Ananias opportunity to change his story and confess the truth, but he did not. The result: God took his life immediately. That same day, Peter asked Sapphira, Ananias’ wife, about the price for which the land was sold. In like manner she too refused to tell the truth and she met the same fate as her husband. Now while God does not use miraculous means to discipline the church or its members today, the church is still expected to exercise earthly discipline in this regard. The failure on the part of Ananias and Sapphira was not that they sinned, for all men commit sin (1 John 1:8, 10), but their deadly failure was that their failure to confess their very public sin in a public way – in the presence of Peter and the rest of the church. What would have been the result if they had acknowledge and confessed their sin ? They would have been forgiven. How sweet that would have been.

Our Savior’s apostles had gained the attention of more than just a handful of onlookers, but there was one whom the Holy Spirit chose to call by name: Simon. This sorcerer watched as the apostles were bestowing miraculous gifts to the newly converted Christians. Just how could Simon make this power his own - money. Thus, for the ability to bestow miraculous gifts as well, he offered the apostle’s money no doubt with filthy lucre in mind. Peter was not amused. As a matter of fact he rebuked Simon with these stinging words, *“But Peter said to him, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money ! You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you, for I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity.” But Simon answered and said, “Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.”* (Acts 8:20-24). Simon was given the opportunity to repent just like Ananias and Sapphira. Instead of refusing to repent as they did, he confessed his sin, repented and humbly requested prayers. Thus, Simon is a wonderful example of one who sinned publicly, realized his mistake, made proper corrections, and was forgiven.

In Galatians 2:11-13 Paul encounters Peter who had been caught in a public sin. *“But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.”* For the hypocrisy Peter displayed publicly, Paul rebuked him.

The city of Corinth was known to participate in outlandish acts of immorality. Even the church was not immune from such debauchery as we have the example of the man who was committing fornication in this very congregation with his father's wife. The sin in which this man was engaged was very public in nature. Paul writes in the first verse of the chapter that it was "actually reported" regarding this man's situation. The remedy that Paul gives for this problem was to handle it in a very public way "...so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Corinthians 5:5). In verse 13 of this chapter, Paul tells the church at Corinth, "*But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES.*" In regards to this individual, the sin was an issue, but not the real issue. The real issue was that he refused to admit his sin, repent of it, and the church was passive in regard to the situation. Once the church took action what transpired? We find in Second Corinthians evidence that this man did repent and that the church needed to reaffirm their love for him. Paul writes, "*Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority, so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him.*" (vss. 6-8). Here we have public sin. The man initially refused to repent, the church withdrew fellowship from him, he then repented and the church forgave him and reaffirmed their love for him.

"Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much" (James 5:16) is perhaps the most direct passage of scripture that deals with confessing sins one to another. Whether private or public, general or specific, the Bible teaches that there are separate processes for handling these sins. We must honor God's pattern in this regard. God is consistent, however, with each of these situations. If we sin privately and we refuse to confess to God privately, then we will have no forgiveness. If we sin publicly and we refuse to confess publicly then we will have no forgiveness. Ultimately when we sin, whether private or public, and refuse to repent and confess, we are rejecting God's plan and desire for our ongoing and ultimate salvation. We are refusing to acknowledge that forgiveness is in the blood of Christ. We are rejecting the covenant for which Jesus died. On the other hand, nothing can quicken the beat of the human heart like the word forgiveness and its blood-bought covenant promises. Eternity will not be long enough to praise God for His wonderful, amazing grace. So let's always repent of our sins in the way God would have us according to His remedy for our eternal soul.

Faithful Christian Living: Jesus, the Master teacher, the greatest teacher past, present, and future called for "balance" when He spoke clearly and emphatically to the scribes and Pharisees, saying, "*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!*" It's critically important to note, the Savior was not criticizing their meticulous payment of tithes, but their lack of balance, for He stated, "...but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others." Being particular about the most exacting requirements of the law, they overlooked the proper attitudes, character, and motivation.

Human tendencies are to define balance by where I am and that any different view had to be off center either to the left or to the right. Thus, concerning the Christian's personal life and the Lord's church, the need for balance is one of the most important foundational principles we could ever understand and practice. To possess that centrist posture that avoids extremes, we need look no further than Jesus Christ, our Savior, to find the perfectly balanced life. "*And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men*" (Luke 2:52). Jesus grew from childhood with incredible balance by giving attention to four areas of His life: the intellectual (wisdom), the physical (stature), the spiritual (favor with God), and the social (favor with men). As His disciples we can begin to find or maintain proper, critical and passionate balance in our lives as we begin to give or continue to give proper attention to these principles. Even though we are several centuries removed from Jesus walking those hot, dusty Palestinian roads, we can give our best effort to accomplish such individually and collectively.

Balance In Intellectual Pursuits: Jesus perfectly balanced His life between the intellectual and the social. Intellectually Jesus grew through the natural process of knowledge entering one's life. It was continual growth in wisdom from a young child when first returning from Egypt to Nazareth. *"The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him"* (Luke 2:40). Quite apparent to all who knew Him, Jesus increased in wisdom on a daily basis like a giant sponge soaking up water. He received even greater wisdom when the Spirit of God was poured out on Him during His baptism at the inauguration of His ministry. *"Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, 'You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased'"* (Luke 3:21-22). Old Testament prophecy spoke of Jesus when Isaiah wrote, *"Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And He will delight in the fear of the LORD, And He will not judge by what His eyes see, Nor make a decision by what His ears hear; But with righteousness He will judge the poor, And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked"* (11:1-4).

This combination of wisdom produced equally stunning results. By the time Jesus carried out His mission among the Jewish nation, His reputation of wisdom was second to none. The gospel writers are clear: *"When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes"* (Matthew 7:28-29). *"He came to His hometown and began teaching them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, 'Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?'"* (Matthew 13:54). *"The chief priests and the scribes heard this, and began seeking how to destroy Him; for they were afraid of Him, for the whole crowd was astonished at His teaching"* (Mark 11:18). The Jews then were astonished, saying, *"How has this man become learned, having never been educated?"* (John 7:15).

Philosopher, Sir Francis Bacon captured balance clearly when he stated, "Reading makes a full man, conference makes a ready man, and writing makes an exact man." Learning should be an integral part of our lives – a life-long process. Let's seek balance in our intellectual pursuits. It is important to be aware of the world events about us through social media, news outlets, magazines, and non-fiction books. However, as Christians let's enthrone the Bible as the most important of our intellectual pursuits and watch the enrichment explode in our lives. Always keep this in mind: *"Men of Issachar, who understood the times and knew what Israel should do"* (1 Chronicles 12:32) and with God's wisdom so will we.

Balance In Care Of The Body. It obvious in today's United States of America there is a dire overall need for proper care of the physical body. Motivations include the best health possible, possibly adding to the length of life, or just a better quality of life. These are all legitimate and noble reasons, however, none of these are the noblest of reasons. God Almighty requires such attention. It is His will.

Our bodies, as temples where divinity dwells, are to be fit as a living sacrifice, holy and worthy. *"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect"* (Romans 12:1-2). *"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?"* (1 Corinthians 6:19).

As those who should be deeply interested in obtaining and maintaining the best bodies we possibly can, prevention of disease and slowing down the aging process should get our attention. Through exercise, good eating habits, and concern for our general health, there is also a time for rest and recreation balanced with our work and obligations. No one worked harder than Jesus, but even He called His disciples away from the scene of activity and rested: And He said to them, *"Come away by yourselves to a secluded place*

and rest a while.” (For there were many people coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat) (Mark 6:31).

There is an interesting account about the apostle John where he regularly stopped work to play with his pet partridge. A hunter, Christian man and friend of the apostle, happened to pass by on his way in from the hills. Somewhat embarrassed to see such a wonderful saint passing the time with a seemingly meaningless bird, he questioned John about his behavior. Pondering the friend's query, John asked, “What is that you carry in your hand?” “It is my bow,” the hunter replied, wondering why the question. The apostle queried again, “And why do you let it hang so loosely. After all, you cannot even shoot an arrow with a bow hanging slack like yours is now?” “No, of course not,” replied the hunter, amused. The hunter, pausing briefly, continued, “If I always kept the bowstring taut, the bow would soon lose its spring and would no longer send the arrow fast and true. I unstring my bow when I am not hunting, so that it will shoot better when I am.” “Ah, yes, that’s good,” said the wise, old apostle, “and that is exactly what I am doing.”

No doubt the Lord implores us to be concerned about the physical body and to be the best we can possibly be, but the sacred Scriptures also implore us to not be too overly concerned about it. However, as balanced Christians according to the sacred Scriptures, we cannot overemphasize the physical to the neglect of the spiritual. *“For bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come”* (1 Timothy 4:8). *“For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace”* (Romans 8:6). Unless our Lord returns first (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), none of us is getting out of this world alive (Hebrews 9:27).

Balance In Favor With Man. Jesus promised this as He poured out His heart to the Father: *“I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one”* (John 17:15). Christians have the challenging call to live in this world but not be influenced by it in a sinful way. In his letter to the church at Corinth the apostle Paul lays some groundwork with this in mind. “I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world” (1 Corinthians 5:9-10). Yet it is inevitable that our Christianity will lead us into conflict with others. *“If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you”* (John 15:18-19). The challenge is to live in harmony with our families, brothers and sisters in Christ, but also with non – Christians. Thus, *“If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men”* (Romans 15:18).

Being a Christian is a golden opportunity to display a great attitude. People may take exception to what we teach, but they should never be able to take exception to our attitude. Paul wrote to his son in the gospel, *“The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will”* (2 Timothy 2:24-26). May there never be a soul on earth that stays closer to the Book than I do. May there never be a soul on earth that is kinder and more considerate with others and even those who differ with me.

It’s healthy for man to be self – reliant but also interdependent. Since man has been designed to live with others, we need each other. Through a caring heart generally blessings result. None is so distressed and to be pitied as those whom have no one on whom they may call. *“Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up”* (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10). *“A man of many friends comes to ruin, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother”* (Proverbs 18:24).

Jesus increased in favor with man, however, He never crossed that threshold into desiring to please men more than His heavenly Father. Paul wrote, *“For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ”*

(Galatians 1:10). This should capture and keep our attention.

Closing: Think of the people we're crazy about, inspired by, devoted to, whom we deeply love. We don't love just parts of them, after all, we need real relationships. Genuine love compels us to embrace the whole person. What's interesting is we might treat God differently by interpreting Him through our own eyes rather than let Him show us who He is. Yet the first time God was asked to name Himself, He said, "*I AM WHO I AM*" (Exodus 3:14). He is simply and infinitely Himself. In Jesus He invites all to get to know Him in the context of a face-to-face relationship. There is an absolute singular beauty about Christ that can absolutely transform us. "*And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature*" (Hebrews 1:3). That's why Jesus came—to be incarnate, to live before us. He said, "...*He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?*" (John 14:9). And "*I and the Father are one*" (John 10:30).

Knowing Jesus Christ "as He really is" is the greatest thing that can ever happen to a person - ever. The enemy is not going to let this happen unopposed. Through the centuries, his number one task has been to prevent the real Jesus from being known. If the single most important thing in life is knowing Jesus, how invested do you think the Enemy is in trying to prevent that ? To know Jesus "as He really is" is to give ourselves to Him fully. This is so crucial. The Savior brings Christianity alive, makes it real, and will do the same for us. The more we see His beauty, the more we will love Him and the more we love Him the more we will be like Him.