

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

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## Is There Anything Wrong with Family Planning?

J.C. Choate

With the world's population growing at such a fast pace, many are concerned about the world becoming over-populated, with health problems and starvation following close behind. Already there are well over five billion people on the globe and several more billion will be added in a relatively short period of time. Many of the third-world countries are especially concerned about their own situation when they think about what happened in Ethiopia and realizing that they are already faced with population problems and poverty level conditions.

The question then is this: How do we hold the population growth down? One solution is definitely wrong and immoral, and that is abortion or the practice of killing babies before they are born. Although this is being practiced more it is still wrong, and will always be wrong.

But another way of controlling the population level is through family planning. This practice has been widely used and seems to be becoming more popular. Of course some would be opposed to it either out of ignorance or because of their religion. Some religions are sustained and increase in number through physical birth only. Minority groups could feel that this is a way to finally

wipe them out. So there are problems with family planning, but what the masses must realize is that it may be a matter of either reducing the size of families or risk being completely wiped out.

What is family planning? It is simply where a married couple plan their family. That is, they decide to have children or not to have children. They may decide to have one child or two children, or more. Naturally the government would like to encourage couples to limit their family to only two children. I believe in China they ask couples to plan to have only one child, and for each additional child there are penalties. But is there anything wrong with family planning? There is not, unless abortion or some other immoral practice was accepted as the way to limit the number of children.

Most married couples have been planning their families all along, regardless of whether the government had a family planning program or not. They planned to have so many children, perhaps more in the past, because there was no real population problem then, and with more children then there would be more to work and help to make a living. So what would be the difference in planning to have a large family or planning to have a small family? There would be no difference, in the sense that planning was done in both instances. In this case, couples just simply decide to have fewer children.

When a couple get married they need to consider their situation, where they live, their income, health conditions, schooling for their children, and perhaps even other matters. But how sad it is for couples to just keep having children when they can't feed them, cloth them, school them, and offer them any kind of a future. These are the kind of people that need to be educated and given guidance in relation to the size of family they should have.

Christian young people need to be thinking about the size of family that they are going to have even prior to marriage. Also their parents should be discussing these matters with them. Once the marriage has taken place, and with children being born to them, then they need to teach and train their children and bring

them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4). Whether one or two or more, if they are brought up on Christian principles, they will much more likely be quality people and make a contribution to society rather than to end up being a liability.

In closing, may I suggest that while the Bible does not speak on this subject directly, it is one of those things that is left up to each couple. But God having given us good minds, with the ability to think, reason, and to use good common sense, then it would seem at this point that it is wise to plan our families, not only from the standpoint of how many children that we have but what we will do with the ones that we do have.

Marriages are planned, that is, young men and women are chosen for one another, or they choose each other; weddings or planned or arranged; the future husband and wife plan on where they are going to live; they further plan to work and to have a family; so what would be wrong to plan the number of children that they are going to have? By doing so they might show far more love and concern for one another and for the children that they do have. The problem is not that family planning is wrong but in getting more couples to practice it.

## The Book of Revelation

Sunny David

Most people have difficulty in understanding the book of Revelation. The highly figurative language of this book has caused many to believe that its contents are largely unintelligible, and for that reason it has often been abandoned by the readers in general. Others, who read this book, do not keep in mind the fact for whom the book of Revelation was actually written and under what circumstances the signified message was delivered. Also, since the message of the book of Revelation was written in symbolic language, which was not difficult to understand by those who had actually received the message in the beginning, because they

understood the meaning of these symbols, but causes many today to misunderstand and misapply its teaching. All kinds of sensational things are being taught today from the book of Revelation which are not true, and many are being misled into falsehood by such sensational teachers. They are teaching about a rapture and about Christ coming in Jerusalem and literally reigning on earth for a thousand year, etc., etc.

From the very first page of the book one can clearly see that the message of this book was directed to the churches in Asia Minor, where Christians were being killed, exiled and robbed of all their properties for refusal to renounce their religion. The message was signified, that is, was shown by signs to them at such a difficult time to give them hope and courage. One notes, the book of Revelation was addressed "to the seven churches which are in Asia" (Revelation 1:4). Although the message of the book was not restricted to the seven churches alone, since number seven is often used in the book of Revelation symbolically for completeness or perfection. The seven churches of Asia Minor were selected by the Lord to be representative of all churches. Because the conditions reflected in those seven churches were also to be found in all other churches of Christ as well. No doubt, its first message was for them, yet its message is universal, because the same message of victory and triumph is to characterize God's people everywhere and in every age.

Also, we observe from the very first chapter and the first verse of the book of Revelation that the things which the Lord had signified to His servant John were the "things which must shortly take place." Revelation means unveiling. This was God's message to His persecuted saints. We, must remember while reading the book of Revelation that they, Christians in Asia Minor, were in need of assurance of help in the immediate present, right then. This would also help us understand why the writer of this book chose to give the message in a symbolic or a figurative language. Because he wanted to hide the message of the book from the enemies of God's people.

There were several reasons why Christians were hated and

persecuted by Romans. First of all Christianity was an exclusive religion, it was also an illegal religion. Christians were accused of cannibalism because in their services on Sundays they ate the Lord's Supper (unleavened bread and fruit of the vine) which represented the body and the blood of Christ. Christians were also hated because they refused to mingle with Romans religiously. Romans were heathens, they practiced idolatry, but Christians refused to worship idols. Their refusal for going to temples where idols were worshipped, and their refusal to have any idols in their homes caused them to be looked upon as enemies of gods, so they were hated. However, the biggest cause of Christian persecution then was their refusal to worship the emperor.

Throughout his empire Domitian, the emperor, had introduced the law of emperor worship. He had images of himself erected throughout the empire to make his worship more convenient for all people everywhere. Not only so, but he made the worship of Caesar (king) compulsory. It was made compulsory for all in Rome to burn a pinch of incense on the altar to the godhead of Caesar, and having done so he was given a certificate, which certified that the person had performed his religious duty. Every Roman citizen had to do that and receive that certificate. And, if any refused to burn the pinch of incense he was rendered by his very refusal an outlaw, he was considered as one who is opposed to the emperor. We can, therefore, readily see how difficult and trying it must have been for one to be a Christian in Rome. To show their loyalty and faithfulness to the emperor all that the Christian had to do was to burn that pinch of incense and say, "Caesar is Lord." But no true Christian would do that, because their Lord was Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ alone. They would give no man the name of the Lord. (Matthew 10 : 32, 33). Thus, the Christians refused to go through the form of Caesar worship, and therefore the Christians were outlaws. For their disloyalty to the emperor, they were put into prison, they were beaten and persecuted, and many were even put to death. The history tells us about Polycarp, one of the elders in the church at Smyrna. During a festival time he was seized. He was given a choice to worship the godhead of Caesar or die. The mob shouted, "This is the teacher of Asia, the elder of the Christians, destroyer of the

gods, who teaches many neither to offer sacrifice nor to worship." Polycarp was asked to renounce the name of the Lord Jesus and confess before all that Caesar was the Lord, they told him that if he would not do that then he would be burned to death. This is the answer that Polycarp gave to his captors, "Eighty and six years have I served Christ, and he has never done me any wrong. How can I blaspheme my king who saved me? It is well," said Polycarp, "I fear not the fire that burns for a season and after a while is quenched—why do you delay? Come, do your will." Then as the flame licked his body, Polycarp prayed, "I thank thee that thou hast graciously thought me worthy of this day and of this hour, that I may receive a portion in the number of the martyrs, in the cup of thy Christ." And so Polycarp died confessing the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To His people the Lord Jesus Christ had promised that if they would be faithful to Him until death then He would give them the crown of life, (Revelation 2:10). That is, even death should not move them from their steadfastness, because the final victory would be theirs, they will receive the crown of life, the eternal life with the Lord in heaven where, "there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain . . . ." (Revelation 21:4), while their enemies and persecutors will be cast into the lake which burns eternally with fire and brimstone. (Revelation 20:10; 21:8).

This was then the message of the book of Revelation which was signified or shown in symbols to the persecuted saints of John's day. Revelation is a series of apocalyptic images shown to John by the Holy Spirit to set forth Christ as eternally victorious over all world conditions and thus to encourage the Christian of John's day, and of every succeeding day until the return of the Lord in judgment. This was a message for them to say to them that the Lord is coming to the rescue of His people shortly, therefore, fear none of those things. The book of Revelation must be kept close to Asia Minor of the first century if its message is to be rightly understood today. No interpretation can be regarded as the correct one if it would have been meaningless to those who had first received the book. They were suffering, they were being

threatened and killed. They needed the message of hope and courage. And the Lord gave them the Revelation. Suppose if I wrote you a letter saying, "I am coming in a short time." Now, when would you expect me to come? Very soon. Right? Why then we shouldn't understand that the things that the Lord signified, in Revelation, by His angel to His servant John were to be fulfilled very soon, at that time, because the Lord said that those things were to "Shortly take place." (Revelation 1:1). Yet, the book of Revelation is a message of hope and encouragement for all Christians in every age, because it tells us that God can defeat all enemies. No one can stand against Him, neither can any thing stop His people from doing His will. He is in control. Revelation has a message of hope for all people who will follow God and do His will, and a message of certain destruction for all who disobey Him. (Revelation 21:1-8).

## The Church Today and 2000 Years Ago

Mark R. Hooper

When people think about the meaning of Christianity today, their thoughts are often very far from what Christianity is in the Bible and what God intended it to be. In the two thousand years since Christ, man has changed many practices and beliefs within Christendom and the result has been divisions, denominations, and a disregard for unity. This is not the Biblical picture of the Lord's church.

In India today, as in other parts of the world, there are many groups claiming to be Christians and followers of the Bible. There are over 300 distinct denominations as well as general divisions such as Catholic and Protestant. This is exactly opposite of God's desire for the church of the Bible. Jesus prayed to the Father in John 17:20-21 that Christians should always be united and be one. Jesus only built one church (Matt. 16:18), and Paul wrote that there is only one body, which is the church (Eph. 4:4-5). Since

the Bible only speaks of one church, and even condemns division (1 Cor. 1:10) the Christians of the world today should be united in Christ and all in the same body or church. But which church or what beliefs should we adopt or disregard since there is such a wide range of doctrines in denominationalism? In order to be united in Christ we must follow only the Bible and exactly the Bible.

Of course, every denomination claims to already be following the Bible. Yet, this cannot be true because of the great amount of differences. Some follow certain parts of the Bible and ignore other parts, or decide among themselves that God's pattern for the church can be changed. This is contrary to the Will of God. Jesus claimed all authority was given to Him (Matt. 28:18), therefore, we have no authority to change His church or its laws (Rev. 22:18-19).

Likewise, Jesus himself made it very clear who the acceptable followers would be. In Matthew 7:21 He explains that "not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." In order to be found faithful, we must be in complete obedience to the Bible. According to Jesus, many will think they are Christians and call Jesus their Lord. But they will not be recognized as such by Christ, simply because they did not obey what God had written.

Therefore, in order to overcome this problem of a divided group of people all claiming to be Christians, yet following different teachings, we must return to the Bible only. We do not need to re-form existing churches, as the Reformation leaders thought, nor do we need to protest against existing false teachings of other churches as the Protestant leaders do. We must do more than that; we must restore the church described in the New Testament of the Bible. We must be like the first century Christians in all ways of belief, doctrine, and practice. We must be the true church of Jesus, the church of Christ. Since there is only one church, we must become members of that church in order to be saved on the last day. If we will just follow the Bible, all of the Bible, exactly the Bible, and only the Bible, we will be God's people, the true



church. If every-one would be willing to do that, there would be no more divisions or denominationalism. We would all believe and teach exactly the same things, only the Bible.

A Restoration Movement has already begun in India. It has been going on for more than twenty-five years and is getting stronger all the time. There are people in Delhi, Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, and Bangalore as well as hundred of other villages and towns who are deciding just to follow the Bible and be Christians only. Why don't you decide to do the same thing and be a true follower of Christ?

## Christ as the Perfect man

Steve Williams

One powerful argument for the validity of Christianity is the moral perfection of Jesus. When a man called Jesus "Good Teacher" he responded. "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone" (Mk. 10: 18). While the man in this story may not have grown enough in faith to be ready for this truth, it is a truth that Jesus is the only person who has ever lived of whom we can say in the absolute sense, in a universal way, with no ifs, ands, or buts with no qualifications, with no reservations, with no explanations, and with no limitations—"He is good!" This moral perfection of Christ is a powerful argument for the divinity of Christ and the truthfulness of Christianity.

Jesus is perfect in that he did no wrong and in the positive sense in that his obedience to the Father was perfect. Jesus holds all virtues and possesses them perfectly. You and I possess virtues, but we possess them in a partial sense and we do not possess all virtues. Many virtues comes in pairs which seem to conflict with one another. It is difficult to possess both virtues in the pair at the same time, yet Christ did and thus is the perfect man. As Hilarin Felder said in one of the most eloquent paragraphs ever penned.

In Jesus . . . all high qualities are to be found. . . in their highest perfection, they all possess the most complete symmetry. Thus we find in him ardent zeal and inexhaustible patience, noble fervour and indulgent leniency, holy seriousness and sunny cheerfulness, an impulse to solitude and yet worldly publicity, majestic and the deepest humility, inflexible determination and the sweetest gentleness, powerful energy and quiet self-possession, the warmest love for sinners and invincible hatred of sin, compassionate sympathy and strictest justice, irresistible attractiveness and fearless frankness, incorruptible truthfulness and extreme forbearance, mildness and force, resignation and tenderness, adamant strength and motherly tenderness, indefatigable outward activity and inward contemplation, childlike confidence in God and manly self-consciousness. In everything—in thinking, in willing, in speaking, in achieving, in precept and in practice, in doing and in suffering, in life and in death—he is equally great and perfect. . . . Jesus has not his equal, nor can there be found outside the history of Christianity either his counterpart or, still less, his model (Hilarin Felder, *Christ and the Critics* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1924, vol. 2, pp. 211, 214).

## Shall All Good Persons Be Saved

Shyam Salem

Many people who are walking honestly, doing things in clear conscience, feeling to be good in all their acts, worshipping God in some way or other are spiritually feeling quite satisfied. I mean they are feeling alright with God. But, there the question is 'Is God alright with them?' Now let us open the Bible and let God answer us through the Bible.

At the first instance let us take the case of a very religious person, called Cornelius. We can classify him as a very good and generous person, very humble and noble officer, a fervent God fearing person and so on. We can put him among morally top

ranked persons in the human society, past and present. We can read about this person in the tenth chapter of Acts.

As we read in the Bible, this man Cornelius was a highly ranked military officer. In spite of the nature of his work, he was a devout man who feared God well even with his household. He gave alms liberally. He prayed regularly to God. In general anyone can say that man can not do much more than this in order to save his soul.

In further reading we find that an angel of God had visited him and told him, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God." Here, we can note that his alms and prayers might be far above many of the Christians. But still his prayer was not heard by God. Simply that came up as a memorial only to God. That meant he was lacking something to be done. For that reason the angel told him to send his men to Joppa to call a man called Peter and he would tell him what he had to do.

He sent his two devout soldiers to Joppa on the following day. Peter with few other Christians had come on the third day. Cornelius with his household and friends were waiting for Peter. Peter opened his mouth and told them about Jesus beginning from the baptism of John. He preached about his crucifixion, burial and resurrection and then walking with them for forty days even eating and drinking with them.

While Peter was still speaking the Holy Spirit fell on them and started talking in tongues. Peter saw the acceptance of God to lead them to water baptism for the forgiveness of their sins. Then he baptized them. So this good man, even though he was well spoken by both Gentiles And Jews, whose alms and prayers had gone up to God as a memorial needed Jesus in order to be saved. He was not saved outside Jesus. Only when he heard about Jesus, believed in Jesus and been baptised for the forgiveness for his sins, he was saved.

Now we can look into the case of a Jewish woman called

Lydia. She was from the city of Thyatira. She came to Philippi for her business. She dealt in purple goods. No doubt she was a very rich woman. But she was characterised as a worshipper of God. That meant she observed the old commandments faithfully. As such even when she was in a Roman Colony, on the Sabbath day she was looking for a certain quiet place for the prayer with her household. (Acts 16: 11-15). The Bible tells, this faithful Jewish woman too needed Jesus in order to be saved. So she with her household listened to Paul's teaching about Jesus. She believed and was baptized.

We can keep on studying about the conversion of different other characters. But for answering our question, "Shall all good persons] be saved" we can conclude that they are not saved and will not be saved without Jesus. One may be of any sort of characteristic, still he needs to come to Jesus, believe in him and obey His words. Only then he can enjoy all the privileges offered in the family of God as a child and true worshipper of God.

## Indulge Yourself

Philip C. Wilkerson

We live in a time when we are literally bombarded with the idea that we ought to indulge ourselves. Radio and television commercials tempt us to try this product or that product by appealing to us with catchy phrases which in essence say, "Show yourself a good time by living your life to the fullest". There are books and movies with "messages" that espouse this same idea, "Indulge yourself in the pleasures of life. You can have anything life offers. Satisfy your every whim, and let nothing inhibit you on your quest to fulfill all your desires." This idea isn't new by any means, but because of twentieth century advances in communication technology, there are few people who have not been influenced by it.

This idea was prevalent in the ancient Greek and Roman

worlds as well. The apostle Paul, a Christian who lived in the Roman world of the first century A.D., wrote about people whose sole aim in life was to indulge themselves, "Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3). By inspiring Paul to say this, God is not condemning the enjoyment of the pleasures of life, rather, God condemns the enjoyment of *sin* (disobedience to the commands of God). Instead of sinfully indulging in the desires of the flesh and of the mind, God offers this alternative, "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" (Philippians 4:8). Rather than indulging in sinful desires, indulge yourself in good practices. Listed below are some excellent ways that you, as a Christian, can indulge yourself.

**Indulge Yourself in Communion with God:** Set aside for yourself some time each day to be alone with God, listening to His message to you from the Bible. The Psalmist knew the joys of indulging in the study of God's holy word. Psalm 139:7 reflects this joy, "How precious are your thoughts to me, Oh God." In fact, the Psalmist had indulged in Bible study to the extent that his life was not complete without spending time in the word, "I long for Your precepts; revive me in Your righteousness," and "Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day" (Psalm 119:40, 97). And, the apostle Paul encouraged the Christians who lived at Colosse to "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Colossians 3:16).

Furthermore, set aside time in your communion with God to speak to him in prayer. One of the most rewarding ways to learn how to pray is by studying the prayers recorded in the Bible. Read Daniel's prayer for knowledge (Daniel 2:17-23), David's prayer for grace (Psalm 25:16), and Christ's prayer for His followers (John 17:1-26). You can indulge in prayer at anytime and in any place (I Thessalonians 5:17), because prayer is a private communication between you and God Almighty.

Jesus gave some guidelines for prayer, and even a *model* prayer to help men understand better how to commune with God in Matthew 6:5-13. Additional verses you should read about prayer include: John 14:13; I John 5:14; Philippians 4:6; James 5:15; I Timothy 2:1-3; I John 1:9 and Romans 8:26-27.

**Indulge Yourself in Silence:** Have you ever noticed what a noisy world we live in? Televisions, radios, and stereos are in our homes, in our cars, etc. And with the advent of the transistor and the microprocessor, we can take these noise makers literally anywhere due to their portability. It's enough to make your ears numb: Indulge yourself in the pleasures of silence occasionally. Unplug the TV, unplug the radio, and simply revel in the silence. Spend that quiet time re-discovering the sounds of nature, or use the time to really listen to and concentrate on what your spouse or your children are saying to you. Pamper yourself with some peace and quiet.

**Indulge Yourself in Critical Thinking:** One of the ill effects of spending so much time watching TV or listening to the radio is that it leaves no time for thinking. One of the most enjoyable pleasures in life is thinking—using your intellect to think critically about your life and your goals, where you are in your spiritual growth, and where you would like to be. The apostle Paul's injunction in Philippians 2:12 seems to bear out the fact that critical thinking is important to our relationship with God. He says, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." And Christ taught that introspection safeguards against hypocrisy by teaching us to remove the plank from our own eye before removing the speck from our brother's eye (Matthew 7:5).

**Indulge Yourself in Self Discipline:** Romans 6:12 lays down a principle for Christian living that addresses the sins of the body. "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts." This principle can be applied to our habits as well. One dictionary offers this definition of the word habit: *an acquired mode of behavior that has become nearly or completely involuntary.*" This means that a habit is something that you have lost control over. Many of us work on the blatantly sinful

habits, but we tend to ignore "innocent" habits that can be just as damaging to our bodies or influence as Christians. For example if you tend to overeat, resolve to control your appetite. Show your stomach who's the boss. Or consider the habit of sleeping late. Discipline yourself to rise early occasionally, and spend an hour or two alone with the word of God, or exercising your mind or your body. Learn to control the habits that are out of control. After all, our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 3:16-17), and by relying on the power of the Holy Spirit living within us, (Colossians 1:9-12; Ephesians 6:10) we can learn to indulge in the pleasures of self-discipline.

**Indulge Yourself By Giving Yourself Away:** one of the greatest pleasures in life is doing something good for someone else. In doing for others, we give of ourselves, we share a part of our lives, and our actions say, "I really care about you." Doing good for someone else is as easy as baking a pie, visiting a shut-in listening to the cares of another, writing a letter, or making a phone call. The writer of Hebrews reminds us of the virtues of indulging in good deeds. "But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Hebrews 13:16).

These are just a few of the righteous indulgences that we as Christians can participate in. Our guiding principle in determining how we indulge ourselves is found in Colossians 3:2, 17. "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth" (v. 2). "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (v. 17).

## Baptism And Its Relationships

Roy Beasley

I know that many good people do not believe that baptism is necessary for salvation, but let us lay aside our ideas and opinions and see what the Bible has to say. In studying New Testament baptism we need to see its relationship to other things. A preposit-

ion is "the part of speech that denotes the relation of an object to an action or thing." In this lesson we wish to study the various prepositions that are used in connection with baptism.

There is the preposition "in". Baptism is in water. In Acts 8, the Ethiopian nobleman was baptized in water. In Acts 10:47, we find Peter saying, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized. . ." In the New Testament we read of various baptisms such as the Holy Spirit, the baptism of fire, etc., but today there is only one baptism. In Eph. 4: 5, we are told that there is "one baptism." The one baptism is the baptism of the Great Commission. Jesus said, "Go teach all nations baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. . ." (Matt. 28:19-20). This baptism was to be practiced "even to the end of the world" and was performed by men. This was the baptism in water.

Baptism is also in the name of Christ. (Acts 2: 38). To be baptized in the name of Christ means to be baptized by his authority.

There is also the preposition "by". In I Cor. 12: 13, we read: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body. . ." To be baptized by the Spirit means to be baptized in accordance with the teachings of the Holy Spirit. Just before his death Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to guide and direct the apostles and other inspired men in their preaching and teaching. These men spoke and wrote as they were guided and directed by the Holy Spirit. We no longer have inspired men, but we do have an inspired book—the Bible. It is through this written word that the Holy Spirit teaches us today, and this word tells us to be baptized. When we follow the teachings of the New Testament concerning baptism we are doing it by the Holy Spirit.

"For" is another preposition we find in connection with baptism. In Acts 2: 38, we read that we are baptized for the remission of sins. The word "for" means "unto". We are to be baptized in order to receive the remission of past sins. This harmonizes with what the preacher told Saul in Acts 22: 16 when



he said, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

"Into" is another preposition used several times in connection with baptism. In I Cor. 12: 13 we are told that we are baptized into the one body. The one body is the church. Baptism is necessary in order to get into the body of Christ—the church.

Baptism is also into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (Matt. 28: 19). Here we have the three persons of the Godhead named. We are baptized into these three names.

In Romans 6: 3, we are told that we are baptized into the death of Christ. Paul argues who are dead to sin should not continue to live in sin. Then he tells us that we died to sin when we were baptized into the death of Christ.

Again in Gal. 3: 27, we learn that we are baptized into Christ.

Let me ask you this question: Have you been baptized in water, in the name of Christ, by the one Spirit, for or unto the remission of sins, into the one body, into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, into the death of Christ, and into Christ?

## Duty

Bill W. Griffin

"Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man". (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

Why do we tend so much towards extremes? I can't answer that question or, if I did, many would disagree with my answer. It does seem to be a human tendency to do so. Don't you agree?

Sometimes we go to extremes regarding duty. Recently I heard a speaker state that service rendered to God, obeying the

commands of God, or doing the will of God out of a sense of duty was not pleasing or acceptable to God. This is too extreme.

There are those who devote themselves to what they think is their duty—"church work," personal evangelism, preaching, etc.—to the neglect of the needs and benefits of their family or other things about which God is concerned. This is too extreme.

There was a time when "duty" was highly regarded. The thought of "duty" stirred the heart because of the basis of it. Today duty is often viewed negatively. It is contrasted with love. The Bible, however, gives a very positive view of duty.

Duty is defined by Webster as: "conduct due to parents and superiors; respect; the action required by one's position or occupation; a moral or legal obligation". Most certainly whatever we can do for God is "due" him. Duty connotes debt or obligation. We most assuredly owe God and are obligated to him. Is it improper or unacceptable to recognize, acknowledge and be motivated by this? "By no means!" "God forbid" Paul said, "I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish; so I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are at Rome". (Romans 1:14-15).

If we do what we do as worship and service to God **only** out of duty, we need to be concerned. If we act or work by constraint or compulsion, hopefully it will lead to better motivation. If we are resentful, unhappy, grudging or angry because we "have to," we should be alarmed; (2 Corinthians 9:7; 1 Peter 5:2).

We are indebted to God because of his love for us. (1 John 4:10-11; Ephesians 5:25). Consider 2 Corinthians 5:14: "For the love of Christ constraineth us; . . ." (KJV, ASV) (Check the definition of constraint). "For Christ's love compels us . . ." (NIV); ". . . leaves us no choice . . ." (NEB) Love of God is obedience to him or doing our duty. (John 14:15; 23-24; 1 John 5:3).

Our duty to God might be said to consist of: total commitment in love (Luke 10:25-28); true worship (John 4:23-24); obedient

service (Matthew 7:21-23; Romans 6:16-18). We must take up our duty daily and allow everything we do to be determined and directed by God's will.

We must do all we can to get each other to "do our duty." We must urge and exhort. (1 Timothy 6:2; Hebrews 3:13). We must provoke and stir one another unto love and good works. (Hebrews 10:23-25).

If we do our duty, we will have no grounds for boasting. (Luke 17:10). We will, however, have a confident hope of a commendation and reward from the Lord. (Matthew 25:21, 23, 34, 46; 1 John 3:21-24; 2 Timothy 4:7-8).

"Stand up, stand up for Jesus, ye soldiers of the cross . . . where DUTY calls, or danger, be never wanting there."

## What About Original Sin?

Ray Hawk

The previous Presbyterian Confession of Faith, states: "By this sin (eating the forbidden fruit) they (our first parents) fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body. They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed and the same death is sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation. From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions".

The idea of original sin is that when Adam sinned, he became totally corrupt and this sinful nature or corruption was passed on to his descendants. Since we are his ancestry, we have this sinful nature called original sin. To overcome this sinful nature, one must have a direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon his heart before he is capable of believing in Christ Jesus. Although one

becomes a Christian and takes on the nature of Christ, he still passes the Adamic nature on to his children.

If this doctrine is correct, it means every child dying in childbirth, goes to hell! Hebrews 11:6 says, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is." A baby does not have the ability to exercise faith in Christ Jesus. If that baby is born with sin and is thereby a sinner, he is lost until he can exercise faith in Christ Jesus and obey the Lord. (Hebrews 5:8,9). Since he dies in childbirth and does not have the faculties to exercise faith, he goes to hell if the doctrine of Original Sin is correct.

In the past ten years, over ten million babies have been murdered through legal abortion. Those babies are living souls. If the teaching of Original Sin is correct, here are over ten million babies that have gone to hell! Who can believe such a doctrine!

The advocates of Original Sin cite Romans 3:10-18 as a proof text. If we carefully read the passage we see that it cannot apply to any inherited corruption of nature existing at birth, but to those adults who had corrupted themselves by wicked works. Have infants, whether new born or those in the womb that have been murdered by abortion, had tongues that "used deceit"? Are the mouths of these babies "full of cursing and bitterness"? Are their feet "swift to shed blood"? Can you imagine a three day old baby lying in wait to murder a one day old baby, or an adult? How can anyone believe these verses are speaking of infants? The context shows Paul quoting from Psalms 14:1-3; 52:1-3; 5:9; 140:7; Isaiah 59:7,8; and Psalm 36:1. These passages are referring to adults who have corrupted themselves by wicked works, not to babies!

Psalm 51:5 is another Original Sin "proof text". David says, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." One of the shortcomings of the NIV is its translation of this passage. However, whether one uses the KJV, ASV, or RSV, the verse is not clearly translated. Was the sin on the part of David as he was being conceived, or on the part of his mother? If we said "In drunkenness my father beat me," would I

mean I was drunk when my father beat me, or my father was drunk when he beat me? I would not be responsible for my father's drunkenness anymore than David was guilty of sin because his mother did wrong when he was conceived. Another possible interpretation is that David is so remorseful over his sin with Bathsheba and its results, that he projects his sins to cover his entire life, from birth to the time he wrote this. What we do not see is a statement from David's pen saying he **inherited Adam's sin**.

Another passage used to justify Original Sin is Isaiah 8:5, 6. This passage is not talking about an individual, but about the nation of Israel. It is always good to look at the verses before and after a passage to see the context. Verse 7 says, "Your country is desolate, your cities . . ." This shows a person is not being described, but a nation. Original Sin is not being discussed, but a nation leaving the paths of righteousness and going into sin.

The next passage is Psalm 58:1-8. Verse 3 is used more than the others, "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking, lies."

These verses cannot be speaking of babies who are supposedly born with the sinful nature of Adam. Who ever heard of a baby speaking lies "as soon as they be born"? Verse 6 states, "Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth." How many new born babies have you known that had teeth which could be broken? Adults have teeth, not newborns.

The last passage is Romans 5:12, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for **that all have sinned**." Sin did enter the world through Adam. We suffer the **consequences** of his sin. Due to that sin, man was cut off from the tree of life. Man dies. Sin brought on physical death. "It is appointed unto men once to die". (Hebrews 9:27). Babies suffer the **consequences** of Adam's act as well as adults. However, **spiritual death** occurs when a person sins, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die". (Ezekiel 18:20), not "The soul that inherits Adam's sin, it shall die"! Romans 5:12 does not address itself to the idea of Original Sin. If it did, it would say, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world,

and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have the sin of Adam"! But it does not say this!

If Romans 5:12 means we inherit Adam's nature because of Adam's actions, then Romans 5:18 means we inherit Jesus' nature because of his actions upon the cross! That would be universal salvation. Actually, the Bible teaches neither extreme.

Ezekiel 18:20 shows the person who sins brings death (separation from God) upon himself by his actions. It also points out that the son does not inherit the guilt of the father's sin not the father the son's iniquities. Jesus pointed out that babies are innocent (without sin) and adults must become as little children, otherwise they (adults) cannot "enter into the kingdom of heaven". (Matthew 18:3). Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these". (Matthew 19:14).

The doctrine of Original Sin is a teaching of the devil to keep people out of the kingdom of God. If one will rightly divide the word (2 Timothy 2:15), he will see the falsity of such teachings.

## Do You Believe in the Son of Man?

Philip C. Wilkerson

In John 9 is recorded the story of Jesus healing the man who had been blind from birth. Although this man's circumstances had reduced him to begging, he was not lacking, at all in intelligence. In fact, his ability to analyze and accept the true theological significance of the healing was far greater than that of the Pharisees who were supposed to be the religious leaders of that day. In verse 35, Jesus found the man after hearing that the Pharisees had put him out of the temple, and asked him, "Do you believe in the Son of Man? The man answered, 'And who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?' Jesus said to him, 'You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking to you.' And the man said, 'Lord, I believe,' And he worshiped Him."

The blind man was able to see Jesus without any bias, whereas the Pharisees were blinded by their own mistaken assumptions concerning the role of the Messiah. Rather than seeing Jesus and believing in Him as the blind man did, the Pharisees rejected Jesus because He did not conform to their presuppositions.

Because the blind man saw Jesus without any pre-conditioned bias, he was able to arrive at two very important realizations. First, he realized that Jesus Christ was a Savior sent from God with the power to forgive men of their sins. And secondly, he realized that he was a sinner in need of such a Savior. These realizations allowed him to accept the reality of his sins, and the forgiving power of Jesus as the Son of God.

In that respect, the blind man is representative of every man who learns of Jesus Christ. All men have sinned (Romans 3:23), and are in need of redemption from their sins. Sin is the failure to keep the commandments of God, and anyone who says he has not sinned makes a liar out of God (I John 1:10). The penalty for sin is physical death (Romans 5:12; Romans 6:23; Romans 13:1-2). But there is an eternal part of man, the spirit, which lives on after physical death (Matthew 10:28; Hebrews 9:27). God will judge the spirit of every man for the deeds done while living on the earth (John 12:48; I Peter 1:17; Luke 23:41; Romans 2:6).

If you die without having accepted Christ, your spirit will be condemned to a place of everlasting punishment and torment (I Thessalonians 1:6-10; Matthew 13:41-42; Revelation 20:14-15,21:8) But Christ can redeem our spirits from that eternal destruction. Those who are obedient to God are promised an eternal home with Him in heaven (John 14:1-3; I Thessalonians 4:17).

Only Jesus Christ is able to redeem us from sin (Romans 3:24 John 3:16-17; Romans 5:8-9). It is only through Jesus Christ, and no one else that we can truly be forgiven of our sins. Jesus Himself said in John 14:6 "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father **BUT THROUGH ME.**"

Once we realize our sinful condition, we must make a decision

either to accept or reject the saving power of the Son of God. Like the blind man, we can accept Jesus as our Savior. Or, like the Pharisees, we can reject Jesus and continuing living in sin. But how does one accept Christ? What are the first steps one must take in order to become a Christian and have the hope of eternal salvation? The very first step in accepting Jesus Christ is to believe that Jesus Christ is the only Savior of man, sent from God (John 8:42; I John 4:14), and you must believe that fact with all your heart (John 8:24; John 11:25-26). Then, you must turn away from your sinful way of life in true sorrow for having sinned against God. This type of sorrow that God desires is called repentance (II Corinthians 7:10). But repentance is not all that is required.

You must also confess your belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, just as the blind man confessed his belief in John 9. Other passages also teach that confession of Jesus Christ is essential to salvation (see I John 4:15; Romans 10:9). In confessing Christ, you proclaim to the world your belief in Christ as the only means of obtaining the forgiveness of your sins. Once you have confessed your belief in Christ and repented of your past sins, you must be completely immersed (baptized) in water for the forgiveness of your sins. The word "forgiveness" simply means that God no longer remembers your past sins. In God's eyes, your life is pure as if you had never sinned at all! (See Mark 16:16; Colossians 2:12-14; Acts 2:38, 8:16, 8:36, 9:18 22:16; Romans 6:3-6; I Peter 3:21.) The water does not save you, the water just represents the blood of Christ which is the only agency for cleansing sin from your life (Romans 5:9; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 12:9-14; I John 1:7; Revelation 1:5; Revelation 5:9).

Once you become a Christian, you must continue to live the Christian life. Colossians 3:1-3 says, "If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on the things that are on the earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God." And I John 1:7 says, "If we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His son cleanses us from all sin." You must continue living



according to the revealed word of God as it is found in the Bible. It is also your privilege as a Christian to worship God along with other Christians. If you do not know where true Christians worship near you, write to this magazine and we can tell you where you can meet and worship with other Christians.

God is not willing that anyone should perish, but that all man should come to a knowledge of eternal life (II Peter 3:9). That is why He gave His only begotten son, Jesus Christ, who offered Himself as the only suitable sacrifice for the sins of man (John 3:16). But it is up to each person to decide for himself whether he will accept or reject the Savior, Jesus Christ.

## Christ the Human-Divine King

Steve Williams

One of the kings of England made an ingenious offer to the Welsh people and brought them into subjection to his rule. He offered them (1) the son of a king, (2) born in their own country, (3) with whom no one could find any fault. The Welsh accepted this offer and King Edward I surprised them with his own son, an infant, who had just been born in a castle within their territory.

It is interesting how God has made a similar offer to mankind. He has offered us one who is the son of a king. Jesus is the Son of God, who is King of heaven. Yet we know that Jesus Christ was born in our own country, the world (Gal. 4:4). Indeed in Christ we are confronted with the mystery of the incarnation where the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (Jn. 1:14). Christ was "born in the likeness of men . . . being found in human form" (Phil. 2:7-8). Just as the Welsh could have a king who was their own countryman, our King is one of us who has partaken of the same nature as us (Heb. 2:14) and is thus understanding of our problems as humans (Heb. 4:15).

Finally the Welsh could find no fault with their new king, since he was an infant who had sinned against no one at that

point. Our King was likewise born as a pure, innocent infant, but he continued on throughout his whole life without sinning (1 Pet. 2:22; 2 Cor. 5:21). "Away then with those wicked men who will not have this King to rule over . . . Heaven and earth cannot afford a more proper prince for the purpose, exactly accomplished with all these comfortable qualifications" (Thomas Fuller).

# Salvation Simplified

Joe W. Nichols

## INTRODUCTION

The Bible bears witness to the fact that God wants mankind saved. Yet, in the midst of religious division, the paramount question remains, "How does God accomplish such" ?

This Article is designed to set forth God's plan of salvation in as simple a manner as possible, while being careful to let the Bible speak. In this manner simplicity can be had and scriptural truth can be achieved on the subject.

### SALVATION IS A FREE GIFT FROM GOD

*Ephesians 2 : 8*—"For by grace are ye saved . . . and not of yourselves, it (salvation) is the gift of God",

*Romans 6:23*—"but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord".

Since salvation is a free gift, it cannot be earned as a whole, or in part; it is 100% free. This was made possible by the death of Jesus on the cross. He earned salvation for every man over 1900 years ago. He accomplished what man could not do for himself.

*1 Peter 1 : 18*—"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things . . . But with the precious blood of Christ".

*Ephesians 1:7*—"In whom we have our redemption through.

His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace”:

1 *Peter 2:24*—“Who his own self bare our sins in His body upon the tree . . . by whose stripes ye were healed.

### QUALIFYING TO RECEIVE THE GIFT

Salvation is a free gift, true, but one must qualify to receive the gift. God forces salvation upon no one. Sin is in direct opposition to all that God is. The only hope for mankind is a Saviour and Master. Jesus is both Saviour and Master in dealing with sin. Christianity is His program of working with sinners in conquering both the humiliation and ruination of sin. We enroll in this divine program of dealing with sin and qualifying for salvation by accepting Jesus as Saviour and Lord. This is done through faith.

*Ephesians 2:8* —“By grace are ye saved through...”

*Romans 5:1-2*—“Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have had our access *by faith into this grace* wherein we stand; and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God”.

Faith in this sense is all inclusive and is equal to obedience, including everything necessary to complement and perfect it. Faith has to do with things hoped for and things not seen (*Hebrews 11:1*). It involves confidence and a conviction in such things as are revealed in God’s Word. Such faith comes by hearing the Word of God. In the same sense obedience involves hearing with an intent desire to respond as well as the response.

An easy way to deduct from the Bible what is included in this faith is to simply list everything mentioned in the New Testament as necessary unto the remission of sins or in order to be saved :

*Mark 16:16*—“He that *believeth* and is baptized shall be saved.”

*Act 2:38*—“Repent ye, and be *baptized* everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the *remission of your sins*.”

*Romans 10:10*—“for with the heart man *believeth* unto righteousness, and with the mouth *confession* is made unto *salvation*.”

*Acts 8:37*—"And Philip said, If thou *believeth* with all thy heart thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus is the Son of God."

*Acts 22:16*—"Arise and be *baptized* and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

God requires faith on the part of the sinner to qualify him as a recipient of His grace. This faith must be expressed in the Christ as both Saviour and Master of the soul. Belief, repentance, confession, and baptism express this faith to perfection. A believer who will turn away from sin and turn to the Master as instructor and Saviour of his soul, confessing Him as Lord, and reenacting through faith the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus in baptism; and in a likeness through baptism being separated from the old man of sin, has with God's help, been brought to a saving faith. This faith God recognizes and in His grace grants the gift of salvation. Remission of sins is extended at baptism. Faith has made access into the grace of God.

### ADDED TO THE CHURCH

As in the first century, so today, God adds to the church daily such as should be saved (*Acts, 2:47*). The church in a universal sense is the congregation of the saved all over the world. In a local sense the church is the congregation of God's people in a community or city. Denominations were unknown in the first century and are the product of the devil and not of God (*Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43*). One should beware of denominationalism in his search for the New Testament church.

Each convert must find people who are saved according to the New Testament plan of salvation and who worship and serve God in a scriptural way (*I Corinthians 1:10*).

### CONCLUSION

The church of Christ in your community is anxious to assist those who will render proper obedience to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and who desire to be Christians only, members of the Lord's church and the family of God. Your call will be welcomed!