

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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## EDITORIAL

### ***Blessed Are The Dead Who Die In The Lord***

Some time back I was reading about a man who, after learning about the death of his friend's friend had asked him the question: "How did he live?" Sounds rather very unusual, because the question usually would be asked: "How did he die?" Yet, the question, "How did he live," is the most appropriate question to be asked, indeed. Because it really does not matter how does one die, but what matters is the fact, how did one live. The future of man's soul's destiny does not lie in death, but is in the life itself. The Apostle Paul so rightly observed at Galatians 6:7, 8 when he said, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows that he will also reap. For he who sows to the flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit, will of the Spirit reap everlasting life." He also said, in 2 Corinthians 5:10 "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

The Holy Spirit inspired the apostle John, in Revelation 14:13, to write: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on, yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works follow them." Why are those blessed who die in the Lord Christ Jesus? Because Lord Christ Jesus had died for them; for their sins; as the propitiation for their sins; instead of them; in their place; to redeem them; as by God's will and grace had tasted death for everyone. (Hebrews 2:9). "Therefore," says the apostle Paul, at 2 Corinthians 5:17-

21, "if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him sin who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

When one believes in Christ; repents of sins; confesses Him to be the Son of God, and is baptized for the remission of sins, as the Bible teaches in Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-6; Acts 8:35-39; and Galatians 3:26, 27, Christ saves that one from sin and adds that one to His church, which is the body of His saved ones; and those in that one body who continue to follow in the steps of Christ making Him the example in daily living; for which the Scripture says, they have been called (1 Peter 2:21); such are blessed in this life; and when this life of earth is over they are blessed even more as they die in the Lord Jesus Christ; because they die as saved and redeemed in Him; having their sins washed away in His blood; to live with Him in His heaven eternally forevermore!

## ***Preaching The Kingdom***

**J.C. CHOATE**

There is probably more confusion and misunderstanding about the Kingdom or church than any other religious subject. The majority look upon the church as being unimportant and therefore unnecessary. It is taught that one church is as good as another, or if one is going to be a member of a church that he can choose the church of his choice. Furthermore, it is thought that if we are going to preach anything that we should preach Christ, but never preach the kingdom or the church.

The problem in all of this is that the vast majority are not familiar with what the Bible says about the kingdom or the church. In the first place, the kingdom or church is the same institution. Christ used these terms interchangeably in Matthew 16:18, 19. When Paul wrote to the church at Colossee, he referred to the members as being members of the kingdom of God's dear Son. (Colossians 1: 13,14). In the Old Testament God promised that he would set up a kingdom that would

never be destroyed (Daniel 2:44), and Isaiah said that it would have its beginning in Jerusalem. (Isaiah 2:2,3). When we come over to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John we read where John the Baptist came preaching that the kingdom of heaven was near at hand. (Matthew 3:1,2). Christ said that some that were living at that time would live to see the kingdom of God come with power. (Mark 9:1). Then after the Lord's resurrection, he spoke to the Apostles about things pertaining to the kingdom. (Acts 1:3).

Everything points to Jerusalem, in approximately A.D. 33, when the Apostles received power from on high, the gospel was preached for the first time in fact, and some 3,000 souls obeyed the Lord and were added to the church. (Acts 2). Then the record says that Philip went to Samaria and preached Christ among them. (Acts 8: 5). The record goes on to say, "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, and they were baptized both men and women." (Acts 8:12).

The kingdom is not only spoken of as the church, but also as the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27), the house of God (1 Timothy 3:15), and the bride of Christ. (Revelation 21:2,9). It is also spoken of as the sheepfold (John 10), the Vine and Branches (John 15), etc., but all of this is to help us to understand what the church is and the importance of it.

What is the church? It is made up of the saved (Mark 16:16), those who have been added by the Lord to his church (Acts 2:47), those who are built on Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11), those who wear the Lord's name (Acts 4:12), and those who have been purchased by the blood of Christ. (Acts 20:28).

But why preach the kingdom or the church? Is the church the saviour? No, the church is not the saviour, since the church is made up of the saved, but Christ is saviour of the church (Ephesians 5:23), the one who died for it (Ephesians 5:27), and therefore we must be members of it if we are to be saved in this world and in the world to come. The kingdom or church was preached then, and must be preached today, to make people aware of it, the importance of it, and the need for becoming members of it.

One cannot be saved if he is ignorant of the church and therefore ends up never becoming a member of it. If one is saved then he is a member of the church because Christ adds the saved to his church. (Acts 2:47). But if one is not a member of the Lord's church then he is not saved. Again, if he is saved he is automatically a member of Christ's church. Not only is he a member of it but he knows that he is a member of it. One cannot go through life ignorant of the church, not knowing anything about it, and be acceptable to the Lord. Neither can he

accidentally be a member. One becomes knowledgeable of Christ and his church, becomes a believer, and obeys him to be saved and to be added to his church.

But what are we doing when we preach Christ and his church? We are simply preaching Christ as being God's Son, the one who died on the cross for the sins of the world. (John 3:16, 17). And when we preach the kingdom or the church we are not saying that the church is the saviour, but rather we do that to acquaint people with the one church of the Bible, the Lord's church, the importance of the church, the need to obey God so that the saved can be added to it, and to encourage the members to be faithful so when Christ comes again that he may receive them unto himself as being his kingdom, his church, his people, and to take them to heaven when they will abide with the Lord forever more.

Remember that if you oppose the church then you oppose Christ as Saul did when he persecuted the church. (Acts 9). Therefore, when you accept Christ, you accept the church because the church is his spiritual body on earth. He loves the church and we should also love it and seek to please the Lord as being faithful members of it.

*Especially For Women*

## *How Do I Become A Christian?*

**BETTY BURTON CHOATE**

"For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." (1 Corinthians 15:3,4).

"Therefore we are buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin . . . But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." (Romans 6:4-6; 17,18).

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatians

3:26,27).

"How do I become a Christian?" asked Anthony when the family gathered for the devotional. "I understand what it means to obey and disobey God, and I don't want to be lost. I want to be able to ask God to forgive me when I do something wrong."

"You've heard that answer many times," Papa said. "You tell us what you understand."

"That Jesus died so that we can be saved from our sins. That being a Christian means to be like Christ. That I would be a part of God's family, His church."

"All of your answers are right, Anthony. And your mother and I are proud of you and thankful that you want to obey God. Since you were a baby we've been teaching you about God, looking toward this time when you would want to be in God's bigger family."

"Do you really understand what it means to call yourself a Christian, Anthony?" That's saying to your friends, to everyone who knows you, that the way you behave is like Jesus would do if He was in your place.

"Now suppose a friend of yours pretends to be you, and everywhere he goes he tells people that he's Anthony. If he behaves just like you would, that might be all right. But suppose he gets into all kinds of trouble. Suppose he fights with your friends and is disrespectful to your teachers. Suppose he lies and steals. What would you think about that?"

"I wouldn't like it," answered Anthony.

"But sometimes that's what people do to Jesus. They take His name, telling everyone, 'Look at me! This is the way Jesus would be if He was in the world now.'" But they don't behave at all like He would live. They may not worship God. They may not be good people. They may even cheat people or fight with them, or lie to them, or do other things that are bad and wrong. But if they do those things, calling themselves 'Christ-like' or 'Christian', they are lying about Jesus. And people who don't know what the Bible teaches may really think that Jesus would do those wrong things.

"So becoming a Christian is a very serious thing, Anthony. Before you do that, you need to think seriously if you will wear His name honestly. You need to decide if you really intended to try in every way to be just like Jesus would want you to be."

"But, looking another way," Mother said, "some people keep delaying the time to become a Christian because they think God will expect them to live perfect lives. So they want to wait and try and see if they can be 'good enough' to be Christians before they are actually born

into God's family. Can we be perfect?"

"No, I don't think so," answered Anthony. "But how does God take away our sins?"

"When we become Christians, sins are washed away, like Ananias told Saul in Acts 22:16: 'Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'"

"But if we disobey God and sin after that, how do we get rid of those sins?"

"The books of 1, 2, and 3 John were written to Christians. Turn to 1 John 1:7 and read that to us, Anthony."

"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.' So, every day it's Jesus' blood that keeps on cleaning away our sins!" exclaimed Anthony.

"Yes, that's right! It's something like if you held up a thin red cloth in front of your eyes, everything you would see would look red. God sees at all of His children through the red veil of Jesus' blood, so He doesn't see our sins. They are washed away in Jesus' blood. That's what it means to be a Christian."

## *The Kingdom Has Come*

M. MINTAH

Jesus taught his disciples to pray in this manner: "Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

As the Old Testament is our basic informant of the New Testament, let's find out its prophecies about the kingdom. Isaiah prophesied about a King and his Kingdom to come. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." (Is. 9:6-7). Daniel also had a vision about the kingdom. In Dan. 2:35,44, and 7:13-14; Daniel saw the Son of Man with the clouds of heaven. He was given a dominion and glory and kingdom that all people, nations and languages should serve Him. His dominion and kingdom is everlasting and undestructive which will fill the whole earth

and will not pass away. Verses 18 and 27; shows us that, the saints of the most high are the people who will possess the kingdom of God forever. John the baptist preached the kingdom of God is at hand (Mat. 3:1-2). We have seen from these passages that even before Jesus came to teach His disciples to pray for God's kingdom to come on earth, the prophets had already prophesied and had already preached of its existence.

Jesus promised to build His church upon the foundation which Peter confessed (Mat. 16:18). He also preached about the kingdom to come. He sent His twelve disciples and later appointed seventy others also to go and preach that the kingdom of God is at hand (Mat. 9:1-2; 10:1,9). Jesus answered and said to Nicodemus "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. (John 3:3-5). Jesus told His disciples that there were some standing with Him who would not taste death until they saw the kingdom come with power (Mk. 9:1). Joseph from Arimathea, a Jew who believed in Jesus, and buried Jesus was also waiting for the kingdom of God (Lk. 23:50-51).

### **PEOPLE THOUGHT OF A PHYSICAL KINGDOM**

King Herod became worried when he heard that king Jesus was born (Mat. 2:2-3). The Jews tried to install Christ as a king among them (Jh. 6:15). The apostles questioned Jesus, when the kingdom would be restored to Israel (Acts 1:6) The pharisees asked Jesus when the kingdom of God would come (Lk. 17:20).

### **CHRIST KINGDOM IS NOT PHYSICAL**

The Bible tells us that, Christ kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). Jesus answered the Pharisees that, "The kingdom of God does not come with observations nor will they say, see here! or see there! For indeed the Kingdom of God is within you" (Lk. 17:20-21). Jesus answered His apostles that, "It is not for them to know the times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem; and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:7-8). All the verses we have read from the Old Testament and the New Testament to this point, speaks of a coming kingdom.

### **HAS THE KINGDOM COME**

Has this predicted kingdom, which has been mentioned several times in the Bible, come? Let's find out from the scriptures. In Acts 2 when the apostles received the Holy Spirit baptism, Peter, preached

Christ resurrected by God to Sit on His throne at the right hand of God the Father, and that God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ. After Peter's declaration of Christ, three thousand people repented and were baptised and were added to the number of the apostles. Let's compare the above passage to John 3:3-5; and understand what Jesus meant when He said, "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (Jesus simply meant that one cannot enter into the church without baptism). And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. Acts 2:47.

When Jesus arose from the dead all authorities were given to Him in heaven and on earth, and so commanded His disciples to go and make disciples of all nations who believe in Him. (Mat. 28:18-20). Let's take notice of the above passage: Somebody given authority over heaven and on earth, commanding all nations. Is He not the King of kings? Paul made it clear in Col. 1:13; that the early Christians were in the kingdom of the Son. Hence the kingdom has come. In Heb. 12:26-28; Paul says God has promised to shake the earth once more, and the only thing that cannot be shaken is the kingdom they have received. In Mark 9:1; Jesus told those who were standing by Him that, some of those people would not taste death till they see the kingdom present with power (There is no proof that any of those people are still alive). God has chosen the poor of kingdom which He promised to those who love Him. (James 2:5). According to 1 Cor. 15:24-25; Jesus is still reigning.

Whenever a king is mentioned there is a kingdom. So if the Bible is proving to us that Christ is still on His throne, and also all who believe in His words and are baptised are in Christ's kingdom, then it means that the prayer which Christ taught His disciples to ask the Father to send His kingdom to come in Mat 6. has come. If so, then as royal priests we have to proclaim the praises of his marvelous light. Also receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and Godly fear (I Peter 2:10; Heb. 12:28).

## *Idolatry*

**RONNIE LOWE**

*"Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry" (I Cor. 10:14).*

*"Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (I Jn. 5:21).*

The sin of worshiping idols was a problem in Old Testament times.



For example, Jeroboam, king of Israel, (I Kings 11-12) set up a golden calf in Dan and another in Bethel. It was also a very big problem for the church in the first century A.D. We can know this because of the many times they were warned to avoid becoming involved in worshiping idols. Idolatry is also a problem today. It is a problem in most nations, and involves people of every social class and educational background. But what is idolatry, and why is it wrong? We will answer these and other questions in this article.

Idolatry is the worship of an object or image. An idol is often an attempt to represent the true God or a supposed god. An idol made to represent God actually **misrepresents** Him. Idols may be images made of gold, silver, wood, or some other material. But a person's idol, or god, may be money, power, popularity, or other things. Covetousness (the love of money or possessions) is idolatry (Col. 3:5). Even religious symbols sometimes become objects of idol worship.

Idols are often used by people to represent a god they cannot see, and to enable them to worship something that they can see and touch. People often find it difficult to believe in something they cannot see or touch. Because of this, many people make for themselves images to aid in their worship. But in the Old Testament, God condemned bowing before an image: "*You shall not make for yourself any carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them . . .*" (Exodus 20:4-5). The New Testament also clearly condemns idolatry (Acts 17:16-29; Rom. 1:22-25; I Cor. 6:9-11; Rev. 21:8; 22:15).

We need to remember that "*God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth*" (John 4:24). In Romans chapter 1, Paul writes of those who "*worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator*" (1:25). Why worship anything less than the Creator Himself?

God instructed Israel not to have any other gods; and not to make any images (Deut. 4:15-16). This was because there is only one true God, and He is a jealous God (Ex. 20:1-5). There is only one God who is worthy of our dedication.

*"To whom will you liken Me, and make Me equal and compare Me, that we should be alike? They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance; they hire a gold-smith, and he makes it a god; they prostrate themselves, yes, they worship. They bear it on the shoulder, they carry it and set it in its place, and it stands; from its place it shall not move. Though one cries out to it, yet it cannot answer nor save him out of his trouble"* (Isaiah 46:5-7). In chapter 44, Isaiah shows us that it makes no sense for a man to cut down a tree and use that tree to warm

himself, cook his food, and also make a god. Isaiah states, *"And the rest of it he makes into a god, his carved image. He falls down before it and worships it, prays to it and says, 'Deliver me for you are my god'"* (44:17). Why do men do this? Instead, it makes sense to worship and serve the true and living God who *"is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us"* (Ephesians 3:20).

There is only ONE GOD whom we must worship and serve. He warns all who do not turn away from idols, *"But the . . . sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death"* (Rev. 21:8). Instead, like the people at Thessalonica, we should choose eternal life by obeying the gospel of Christ. They *". . . turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come"* (1 Thess. 1:9-10). Let each of us be sure that we worship and serve the true God in the proper way.

## **"Go"**

### **ROYCE FREDERICK**

The Bible tells us about the faith and failings of the apostles when Jesus told them to "Go". This can help us see our own sins and overcome them (Jas. 1:23-25; Rom. 15:4).

#### **"GO TO GALILEE"**

Before His death, Jesus warned His apostles, *"All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee"* (Matt. 26:31-32).

Peter sometimes thought he knew more than the Lord and argued with Him (Matt. 16:21-23). This time Peter said, *"Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble"* (Matt. 26:33). In response, Jesus fore-told that Peter would **even deny Jesus three times**. Peter argued again, *"Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!"* (Matt. 26:35). But he did (Matt. 26:69-75). Instead of arguing, he should have listened to the Lord's **assurance and instructions**: Jesus would not remain dead, they would not remain scattered, and they would see Him in Galilee.

Early on the day Jesus arose, an angel at His tomb told a group of

women, "... 'go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him ...' And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, 'Rejoice!' ... 'Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me'" (Matt. 28:7, 9-10). They did not speak to anyone else, but delivered the message to the apostles (Mk. 16:8-11; Lk. 24:9-11).

Most of that glorious resurrection day passed without the apostles seeing the risen Lord. He finally appeared to them that Evening (Jn. 29:19; see I Cor. 15:5), but their reunion was not completely joyous. "Afterward He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen" (Mk. 16:14). He had power to known hearts (Matt. 19:4). But their unbelief was clearly visible: they were still sitting at the table! They had not gone to Galilee.

### "GO INTO ALL THE WORLD"

Later, the apostles did go to Galilee (Matt. 28:16). There He commanded, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you ..." (Matt. 28:19-20).

This time, the command to "go" was much greater. It required them to travel great distances and overcome great prejudices in their hearts. It involved taking the gospel to all people in all nations—to Jews, proselytes, Samaritans, and Gentiles. "Jews" were of Jewish ancestry and Jewish religion; they lived in Israel and other nations (Acts 2:5). "Proselytes" (Acts 2:10; 8:27) were Jewish by religion, but not from Jewish ancestors. "Samaritans" were a mixture of Jewish and non-Jewish ancestry; they did not worship according to the Jewish religion. There was often hatred between Jews and Samaritans (Jn. 4:9; 8:48; Lk. 9:51-56). "Gentiles" includes all who were not Jewish by ancestry nor by religion. Sometimes they are called "nations," "Greeks," or "Hellenists." Jews and Gentiles often showed great prejudice and hatred toward each other.

To accomplish His plan for all people, God first made a covenant with the Jews (Israel) only. In the last days of the Old Covenant, Jesus preached to Jews, but also had compassion on Samaritans and Gentiles (Gal. 4:4; Matt. 8:5-13; 15:21-28; Lk. 9:51-56; 17:11-19; Jn. 4:1-42). He foretold that Gentiles would enter His kingdom (Matt. 8:11; 21:43; See Gen. 12:3; Jn. 1:29). When the time was right, God removed His Old Covenant and gave His New Covenant through Jesus for all people (Col. 2:14; Heb. 8-9; Rom. 1:16).

Before returning to heaven, Jesus reminded His apostles, "... you

*shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth*" (Acts 1:8). Would they "go" this time?

**JERUSALEM**—The apostles courageously preached in Jerusalem to the people who had killed Jesus (Acts 2). That first day, three thousand obeyed the gospel! Soon, enemies arrested Peter and John and threatened them, but they **boldly continued preaching** (4:5-33). Later, **all the apostles were put in prison**. But an angel released them and said, "*Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life*" (5:20). They **did** (5:21). Again the enemies arrested them and charged, ". . . *you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine . . .*," but they replied, "*We ought to obey God rather than men*" (5:28-29). They **beat** the apostles and released them. And the apostles departed ". . . *rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ*" (5:41-42). We need to likewise preach the gospel with courage and love (see Eph. 4:15).

**JUDEA and SAMARIA**—Who first preached in Judea and Samaria? A ". . . *great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles . . . Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word*" (Acts 8:1, 4).

Philip (not the apostle, Acts 6:5) was first to preach in the city of Samaria. And ". . . *when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized*" (Acts 8:12). When ". . . *the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them*" (8:14). These apostles gave the disciples some miraculous powers, then preached in Samaria and in many villages of the Samaritans (8:25).

**GENTILES in ISRAEL**—After Acts 2, about ten years passed before the apostles preached to Gentiles (Acts 10). In a vision, an angel told the Gentile Cornelius, ". . . *send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter . . . He will tell you what you must do*" (10:5-6). He immediately sent two servants and a soldier to Joppa (10:7-8).

The next day in a vision, Peter saw all kinds of birds and animals being lowered to him from heaven. The Old Covenant had forbidden eating some kinds of meat (Lev. 11), but the New Covenant **does not** (Mk. 7:19; 1 Tim. 4:1-5). Peter was "*very hungry*" (10:10) and a voice **told him to eat** (10:13). But he **argued again** (even in a trance!), "*Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean*" (10:14). A voice replied, "*What God has cleansed you must not call common*" (10:15). This occurred **three times**. Then the Holy Spirit said, ". . . *go*

down and go with them . . ." (10:20).

In earlier years, Peter often spoke or acted without carefully thinking (Mk. 9:5-6; Lk. 9:32-33; Matt. 17:24-27). But when he went to these Gentiles, **six Jewish Christians went with him** and later helped him as **witnesses** (10:23; 11:12). In the city of Caesarea, Peter told the Gentiles, ". . . *God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean*" (10:28) and, "*In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him*" (10:34-35). Peter then preached about Jesus to these Gentiles.

Peter had taken two steps: going and preaching to the Gentiles. Two more steps remained: baptizing them in water and teaching them to observe all things the Lord had commanded (Mat. 28:19-20). **A great miracle** removed the last barriers. As Peter was preaching, ". . . *the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed [Jewish Christians] were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues [languages] and magnify God. Then Peter answered, "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"* (10:44-47). This sign from God silenced all objections from the Jewish Christians. In Acts 2, the **speakers** were baptized in the Holy Spirit, and the hearers were amazed (2:7). But in Acts 10, the hearers were baptized in the Holy Spirit, and the Jewish Christians were astonished. They could not forbid water. So ". . . *he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days*" (10:48).

Like the Jews, the Gentiles were **saved by faith when they were baptized in water** (see Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 3:20-21; Eph. 4:5). To be saved from sin, a sinner must believe, repent, confess his faith in Christ, and be baptized in water for the remission of sins (Jn. 3:16; Acts 17:30; 8:36-39; Rom. 10:9-10; 6:3-5, 17-18; 22:16; Mk. 16:15-16; Gal. 3:26-27).

The apostles and brethren in Judea ". . . *heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision [Jewish Christians] contended with him*" (Acts 11:1-2). With the six Jewish Christian present (11:12), Peter told about the visions, the voice of the Spirit, and the baptism in the Holy Spirit (11:4-16). Then he said, ". . . *who was I that I could withstand God?*" When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, *Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life*" (11:17-18). The Jewish Christians in Jerusalem finally realized that they should not prevent Gentiles from obeying the gospel.

**GENTILES in OTHER NATIONS**—The Gentiles in Acts 10 lived in Israel, not in a foreign nation. *"Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists [Gentiles], preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord"* (Acts 11:19-21)! Again, brethren in Jerusalem heard about this and sent Barnabas to Antioch (11:22). He *"... was glad and encouraged them... And a great many people were added to the Lord"* (11:23-24). Finally! The gospel was preached freely to Jews and Gentiles!

Their teachers did not show jealousy, but worked together to save and strengthen souls (11:25-26; 13:1). They even listened to teaching from Saul of Tarsus, who—before obeying the gospel—had killed and persecuted disciples and caused much of the scattering (Acts 8:1; 9:1-31; 22:4)! They assembled and grew together (11:26). The forgiveness and fellowship at Antioch was marvelous!

Is it any wonder that Antioch was honored in a very special way? *"And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch"* (Acts 11:26; see Isa. 62:2; 1 Peter 4:16)! By loving all people without prejudice, the disciples at Antioch showed us what the name "Christian" really means!

**Every person on earth is equally precious to God!** In Christ, there are no castes, no upper and lower classes. *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus"* (Gal. 3:28). We must love all people of all nations, men and women, rich and poor, without prejudice of any kind (Jas. 2:1-13; 3:17; 1 Tim. 5:21).

When the Lord says, "Go," He means, "Go." Antioch taught the gospel at home and far away (Acts 13:20). We do not have apostles on earth today. But we do have millions of souls lost in sin, and we have the gospel which is God's power to save them eternally. All Christians must help in saving souls (Jn. 15:1-5; Gal. 5:22-23; Matt. 5:16; Phil. 1:27; Jude 3). By the example of our life and the message of our lips, we must take the gospel to family members, neighbours, and all people. When we teach and encourage everyone alike, many souls will be added to the Lord!

# ***What It Means To Be A Christian!***

**DILLARD THURMAN**

The religious thinking of many has been corrupted by the sentiments of the song, "Let Jesus Come Into Your Heart." As within this thinking there comes the plea, "Just kneel where you are, and invite Jesus into your life;" or yet again, "Pray for the Lord to come into your heart, right where your are!" But friends, have you read this in God's plan of salvation? or did this come from man? Did inspired men tell people to "Open your heart and let Jesus in," or was a different gospel preached to a lost, sin-cursed world?

## **Christ Is the Way to Salvation!**

Jesus openly and plainly taught: "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me,*" (Jno. 14:6). There is no other means of access to God, and there is no other way to salvation! Jesus further stated: "*I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.*" (Jno. 10:9). We must approach God in and through Jesus Christ! This shows why it is important to be in Christ! to be sure, we must have Jesus in our hearts and in our lives! But when does Jesus come into the heart and life of an individual? The change is made as we come into Christ, for then He comes in to bless us!

Paul writes of the mystery revealed unto the saints, saying, "*To whom God would make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*" (Col. 1:27). Surely, Christ was in them: but they were first in Christ, for he wrote, "*To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ.*" (v. 2). After they came into Christ, then Christ came into them, as the hope of glory! This relationship meant everything to Paul, for he said, "*For whom (JESUS CHRIST) I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him.*" (Phil. 3:8-9). He could turn from the world just to be found in Christ, with hope of the resurrection! This is what it means to be in Christ!

## **The Promises of God Are in Christ!**

When Paul proclaimed, "*For all the promises of God in him are Yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us*" (2 Cor. 1:20), he was only expressing a truth known of old! *And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen by faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.*" To this can be added the clarification that follows: "*Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to*

*seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which in Christ."* (Gal. 3:8, 16). Thus the promises were fulfilled in the Christ; and so it was proclaimed from the start! Even as Peter declared: "*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*" (Acts 4:12). To be saved, we must be in that Seed of Abraham, which is Jesus Christ!

In this chapter, it is revealed just how the promise through the seed of Abraham is obtained: "*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.*" (vs. 26, 27). The promises, being located in Christ, could not have been had while OUT of Him! So Paul concludes: "*And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*" (v. 29). The promise of salvation in the seed of Abraham (which is Christ) is gained only when we are baptized into Him, for therein we become children of God: "*And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*" (Rom. 8:17). This, my friends, is what it means to be in Christ! How can any desire to remain outside?

### **One is a New Creature in Christ!**

There is a completely new relationship when one comes into Christ! The old man of sin has died, and a new man lives unto God! Paul's exclamation highlights this new life in Christ: "*Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? 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. 6:1-4). This shows the complete change of life to be accepted when we enter into Christ! The whole world should be able to note the difference! It will show in every way as we meet the trials, tribulations and temptations of this life! "*Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin . . . likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" (Rom. 6:6, 11). The new relationship is forcefully stated in 2 Cor. 5:17—"*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*" The shackles of sin are thrown off, and the fear of death is abolished: "*For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*" (1 Cor. 15:22). Yes, all that we hope to obtain is found only in Christ Jesus! "*And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.*" (1 Jno. 5:11). This is what it means to be in Christ!



## **Our Redemption is in Christ!**

Sins are never forgiven out of Christ, nor can we reach the cleansing blood elsewhere! The cleansing fountain is found only in Jesus Christ! *"In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."* (Col. 1:14; Eph. 1:7). It was God's Son who paid the price for our redemption: *"Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."* (Heb. 9:12). Peter assures us that we are not redeemed with corruptible things; *"But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."* (1 Pet. 1:19). Thus was there the exaltation in the eternal courts of heaven; *"And they sang a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seal thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people and nations; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."* (Rev. 5:9-10). As ransomed, redeemed souls we reign with Him in His kingdom, even as He lives within us and we in Him! This is what it means to be in Christ!

## **We are Reconciled to God in Christ!**

While we were in sin, we are estranged from God as enemies; not because of any lack of love on His part: *"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. 59:1). But Christ came to restore us unto God with His word of reconciliation! *"But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace . . . for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby . . . For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."* (Eph. 2:14-18). The Son of God left heaven, and came to earth to effect this reconciliation!

This whole scheme of reconciliation is recounted fully: *"And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself . . . And you, that were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight."* (Col. 1:20-22). How gracious of God that He provided such reconciliation to those so unworthy! *"For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."* (Rom. 5:10). But not only can we be reconciled to God, but we have been given the means of reconciling others to Him also! *"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us unto himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation . . . Now then we are ambassadors for*

*Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." (2 Cor. 5:18-20). Who would want to have the Creator of the Universe as an enemy? Yet, reconciliation with God is to be enjoyed only in Christ!*

### **Divine Fellowship is Only in Christ!**

What sweeter thoughts can flood the soul than that of fellowship with the Father, Son, and the saints of God? But have you considered that this is possible only in Christ Jesus? John spelled this out very clearly—*"That ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ . . . If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 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."* (1 Jno. 1:2, 6-7). Thus it is in Jesus Christ that we come into fellowship with God the Father, with His Son, and with all the saints!

The first converts (in Jerusalem) were baptized into the name of Christ for remission of sins, and were added to the saved (Acts 2:38, 41). Then is recorded of them: *"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."* (Acts 2:42). Their fellowship with one another came because of their fellowship with God and His Son (see texts from 1 Jno. 1). This fellowship was to be gained only in Christ! This is what being in Christ means to the children of God!

For your further study, we recap the points we've made, and add others that you may see the advantages of being in Christ, (1). All promises of God are in Christ (2 Cor. 1:20), along with all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3). (2). We are created in Christ (Eph. 2:10), thus made alive (1 Cor. 15:22), and become a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17). (3). We are reconciled to God, and have peace with all nations and races in Him (Eph. 2:11-16). (4). In Christ we have salvation, without condemnation (2 Tim. 2:10; Rom. 8:1). (5). It is in Christ that we find rejoicing (Phil. 4:4), for there our work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope are remembered (1 Thes. 1:3). (6). In Christ we are made complete (Col. 2:10), and will even be blessed in death (Rev. 14:13). You can advance this study by searching for other blessings that are to be found only in Christ! But this lesson should impress upon you just what it means to be in Christ Jesus!

Friends, since all spiritual blessings are in Christ, it must be recognized that only in Him can we offer up acceptable prayers to the Father, since He is the Mediator (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 9:15). Therefore the most important thing in life is to be in Christ! As one expressed it: "If I

can get into Christ, and stay in Christ, and stay out of everything else—well, I won't go to hell, less'n Jesus went there!" That may not be good English, but it is good thinking! We urge you to study the scriptures cited, along with others, and then render your obedience to the gospel of your salvation!

## *Driven By Fear*

JOHNNY RAMSEY

One man admitted he was only afraid of three kinds of snakes—live ones, dead ones and artificial ones! Some folk who claim to be Christians seem to be so fearful of so many things their lives become almost useless because they are consumed with self-preservation. The time they need to launch out into deeper spirituality has already been overwhelmed by fears and phobias of a thousand varieties. Since the Lord has promised to be with us always we ought to learn to do as He says, "*Casting all your cares upon him, for he careth for you*" (1 Pet. 5:7). But, sadly, Cervantes was correct when he said, "fear has many eyes and can see things underground."

Imaginary problems keep thousands handcuffed to a life of emptiness. The past, present and future for myriads of folk is truly void of any really meaningful experiences because of the worry-wart syndrome. God's word, like a bright beacon of hope, still has a clarion call: "*Be of good cheer, it is I; be not afraid*" (Matt. 14:27). Faithful Christians know that whatever tomorrow brings, we, with God, can handle in (1 Cor. 10:13). The language of Psa. 31-24 rings out in our hearts: "*Be of good courage and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.*" Emily Bronte wrote memorable words in concert with Bible teaching over a century ago: "no coward soul is mine, no trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere: I see Heaven's glories shine, and faith shines equal, arming me from fear." That is exactly the way it ought to be, if we really trust in the Creator.

What is there to be afraid of? Death is not a problem for the loyal servant of Christ. Jesus told John to write, "*Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord*" (Rev. 14:13). We need not fear earthly rulers, for God "*Rules in the kingdom of men*" (Dan. 4:25). Starving to death is no concern for devotees of the Savior (Psa. 37:25), for we have meat and bread and water to partake of that the world does not even know about (Jno. 4:32; 6:27; Rev. 7:17).

Solomon did tell us to "*fear God and keep his commandments*"

(Eccle. 12:13), and Heb. 12 informs us that godly fear is always in style. But Christians do not fear and sorrow as the hopeless world does (1 Jno. 4:18; 1 Thes. 4:13-18). When those professing Christianity act and react just like the world, we lose a glorious opportunity to lead men to the joy and peace of the gospel! These words from John Bunyan, three centuries ago, are still appropriate:

*Then fancies flee away  
I'll fear not what men say  
I'll labor night and day  
To be a pilgrim.*

Since we are pilgrims here (1 Pet. 2:11), let us at least learn to fear the right things!

## ***Can One Learn About God From Nature?***

**BRAD T. BROMLING**

"Man can learn absolutely nothing about God from an examination of nature." This statement has often been made, but is such a position valid?

It is true that there is much that man cannot learn about God without written revelation. Man will be unable to deduce from the natural realm what he should call the Creator, the price the Creator paid to secure man's salvation from sin, or what he requires of man to obtain that salvation. Likewise, man will fail to learn how to worship God, or how to prepare for death. These are but a few of the things which man learn only by searching the Scriptures.

However, acknowledging the limitations of a thing does not thereby dismiss its value. For instance, the Bible teaches nothing of how to remove cataracts, but this limitation does not repudiate the ability of the Scriptures to cure spiritual blindness. Although there is much that the creation cannot tell of the Creator, the Bible itself teaches that man may know something of God from nature. For example, David boldly exclaimed: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork" (Psalm 19:1). Such declarations are sufficient for the purpose intended: "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20). The available information leaves man without excuse. Some assert that this passage only refers to men who had been exposed to the written Word. However, nature's testimony of God is not

withheld from those who have never heard the gospel—it speaks from every atom to every man, everywhere! This proclamation is as universal as the weather. Jesus said: “God makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 6:45). Herein is a powerful witness to God’s existence. This point was made by Paul: “God in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons . . .” (Acts 14:16, 17). Thus, inspiration claims that nature does teach man about God.

What, then, may one learn of God from the natural realm? The main arguments for God’s existence yield different information about the Almighty.

### THE COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

This is perhaps the strongest argument for the existence of God. It affirms that every effect must have an adequate cause. Hebrews 3:4 contains a simplified form of the argument: “For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God.” No sane person assumes that a house created itself or that it has always existed. Likewise, we are right in questioning the sanity of one who looks at the vast universe with all of its intricacies and exclaims: “There is no God!” Little wonder that David called the atheist a “fool” (Psalm 14:1). Scientific inquiry leads us to conclude that since the universe is made up of matter and matter is neither eternal nor capable of bringing itself into existence, it must have been created. If the universe was created, a Creator must exist. With this argument, man may reason that God is infinite in His power. He must be all-powerful, in order to be superior to all He has created (the thing created is never greater than its creator). Since life, intelligence, and love exist, we may properly conclude that God possesses these characteristics as well.

Two criticisms of his argument have been raised. First, if everything has a cause, then God must have a cause. This misses the point of the argument, which says: “every effect has a sufficient cause.” God is not an effect, He is a cause—the first Cause. Second, since evil exists, and must have a cause, is not God evil? While it is true that evil is an effect, it does not follow that God is evil. God created man with the ability to choose right from wrong. In so doing, he allowed man the option of introducing evil into his world. Had man never sinned, evil would not now plague him. Man has himself to blame (Romans 5:12). One might complain, “God is still responsible since He created man with the ability to choose wrong!” This complaint fails to recognize the importance of free-will. Is there a man who would wish to give up his

free-will? Finally, the problem of evil was resolved on Christ's cross, anyway. Freedom from the tyranny of evil is available to all who accept the salvation offered by God.

### THE TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

This argument is closely related to the cosmological argument in that it also argues from effect to cause. The difference is that the teleological argument begins with a design and argues for the existence of a Designer. The most popular example of this argument was formulated by William Paley in 1802. Paley reasoned that if he were to stumble upon a rock in a field he might conclude that it has always been there. But if he were to come upon a watch, such a conclusion would be absurd. The truth is, a watch bears every mark of being crafted by an intelligent watchmaker. Likewise, the universe bears every mark of intelligent design and, therefore, points to the existence of an intelligent Designer. The order and elaborate design of our grand Universe tell us that God is orderly and intelligent.

### THE MORAL ARGUMENT

Once again arguing from effect to cause, this argument suggests that if there is a moral law in man, a moral Lawgiver must exist. It is a matter beyond dispute that wherever man is found, regardless of how advanced or primitive his culture may be, he operates according to the concept of right and wrong. While cultures often differ over what things are prohibited or allowed, no culture exists which fails to recognize a distinction between the two. Whence came this moral sense? Moral capacity is an effect which has God as its adequate Cause. This truth of nature tells us that God is a moral being desirous that His creatures do right.

### CONCLUSION

While man's knowledge of the Almighty is severely limited without the written Word, it is clear from sober reasoning that the creation testifies, unmistakably, of the supreme, intelligent Creator we call God.

## *Four Views Of Death*

DAVID WADE

Death is an ever present reality. We may deny our mortality and we may "run" from death. However, eventually, every person must face

his appointment with death. "And it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).

People view death in different ways. For some, death is their greatest fear. To others, death is the doorway to their greatest hope. How do you view death? Let us be impressed with four views of death we find in the Scriptures.

First, consider God's feelings toward the death of his saints. David said, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15). The death of his saints is precious to God, because it is costly. It cost the blood of Jesus on the cross for our sins. Christians are redeemed by the "precious blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:19).

Notice also that the precious death of the saint is "in the sight of the Lord." Speaking of the "valley of the shadow of death," David exclaimed, "thou art with me" (Psalm 23:4). When Lazarus died, his spirit was "carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:22). When a faithful Christian dies, he does so in the attentive presence of our loving God. The death of a saint is precious in God's sight.

Consider the view of death held by the faithful departed Christian. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13). They are blessed or happy. "Blessed" is the same word Jesus used to introduce the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12). Jesus said of Lazarus that "he is comforted" (Luke 16:25). The faithful Christian is able to enjoy an eternal rest from all labor, pain, sickness and death (Revelation 21:14).

In addition, the influence of the faithful Christian lives beyond his earthly pilgrimage to influence others for good. The faithful example of righteous Abel speaks eloquently to us even to this day (Hebrews 1:4).

Consider the view of death Paul urges for every faithful saint this side of eternity. "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). Our lives must be centered in Christ, "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). Further, Paul said, "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you" (Philippians 1:23-24). The faithful Christian enjoys all spiritual blessings in Christ now (Ephesians 1:3). One can look forward to the "gain" that is "far better" when this earthly life is over.

Consider the view of death held by the unredeemed when they suddenly discover they have squandered their last opportunity to serve God. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31). When that day comes the falling rocks and mountains cannot hide the unredeemed from the wrath of the Lamb (Revelation 6:16). They will hear the fateful words, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into

everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41).  
What is your view concerning death?

## **To Love God**

**BOBBY KEY**

A member of the church says, "since other denominations love God, surely they will be saved." This brother speaks of "other denominations" indicating that the church of Christ is a denomination. I deny this! If the church were a denomination we had just as well be a member of other denominations. I had as soon belong to one human organisation as another. The truth of the matter is that all denominations are sinful. I read of the one body, which is the Lord's church in the Bible (Colossians 1:24); however, search as I may, I am unable to find a single denomination on the pages of the sacred text. The Word of God knows of no denominations and makes no promise to them.

It is not my place to offer hope of salvation to any person who has failed to obey the gospel of Christ (II Thessalonians 1:7-9). Now to the thought on love—the only love for God that will do a man any good is that love which leads him to obey God. "If a man love me, he will keep my words," said Jesus (John 14:23). Again we read: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he is it that loveth me . . . He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings" (John 14:21, 24). These passages show plainly that God loves and recognizes only those who love him so far as to keep his commandments. One of the Lord's commandments is to be baptized in water for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). Most denominations do not believe that baptism has one thing to do with remission of sins or eternal salvation. Is it possible for one to love the Lord while ignoring this simple command? In fact, if everybody loved the Lord according to the above passage there would be no denominations on the face of the earth.

We need to study again the undenominational nature of the church found in the New Testament. The church is the body of Christ, and every Christian is a member of it. There are two kingdoms on earth—the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. All who obey God are added to the church—the kingdom of God (Acts 2:47). Christ is the head of his church and the Saviour of his body. For this reason there is no promise of salvation outside of the Lord's church. Why should anyone belong to anything else?