

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

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## EDITORIAL



### Baptism Of Fire

The word 'baptism' has its origin in the Bible. There are atleast seven kind of baptisms mentioned in the Bible. We read of John's baptism in Mark 1:4 and Acts 19:3. The Apostle Paul at I Corinthians 10:2 said that the Israelites were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. Then in the same epistle he mentioned of those who were baptized for the dead. (1 Corinthians 15:29). Prior to His death, Christ referred to His suffering on the cross and said, "But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished." (Luke 12:50). Then, also, we read about the baptism of the Great Commission, which Jesus has commanded for all believers for salvation. (Mark 16:16). But John the Baptizer had made this statement concerning Christ: "I indeed baptize you with water; but one Mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire". (Luke 3:16).

The purpose of this article is not to discuss each of the seven baptisms as mentioned above. We will, however, focus our attention here on the baptism of fire. John mentioned here in Luke 3:16 and also in Matthew 3:11 that Christ was to baptize with the Holy Spirit AND with fire. As far as Holy Spirit's baptism is con-

cerned, we have already, in our last editorial, discussed at length about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. But what is the baptism of fire?

When the Apostles on the day of Pentecost were baptized with the Holy Spirit, the record there says, "Then there appeared divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them." (Acts 2:3). Some have concluded from this that the Apostles were the ones who were baptized with the fire also along with the Holy Spirit. This can't be true, however. Because it was something "as of fire", and not fire that had sat upon each of them. Besides, where John said Christ would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire, in the very next verse he added, "His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire." (Luke 3:17). From this we understand that the fire baptism will be the fire of hell where all wicked and unrighteous will be cast. Since baptism means a burial or immersion, therefore those who would be cast into the lake of fire will thus receive the baptism of fire on the day of judgment. We are told in Revelation 21:8, "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolators, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Notice, hell here is described as the lake of fire, and it is also called the second death, which means a place of eternal separation from God. Death means a separation. (James 2:26). According to Hebrews 9:27, "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment." This death, the separation of the soul from the body, is appointed for all. All must face physical death, whether they be righteous or unrighteous, young or old. But the second death, the lake which burns with fire and brimstone is for those who live and die in sin.

All accountable being, who are able to distinguish between right and wrong, and who are old enough to repent or change, have sinned. (Romans 3:23). And all sinners will receive the baptism of fire on the day of judgment. The only way to avoid

fire baptism is to believe in Christ Who by the grace of God tasted death on the cross for every person, and repent of all sins and be baptized in water for the forgiveness of sins, the way Christ commanded. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). According to Christ, "If your hand makes you sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched." (Mark 9:43, 44). In the book of Revelation, John wrote, "And anyone not found written in the book of Life was cast into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:15). But, he said, "Blessed and Holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power . . . ." (Revelation 20:6).

When one is baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27), in water (Acts 8:38), for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38), he thus become united together in the likeness of Christ's death and burial and resurrection. The Apostle Paul wrote to Christians at Rome and said, "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 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." (Romans 6:3, 4).

According to Revelation 20:6, "blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power". This simply means that those who have been baptized into Christ then they have had part in the first resurrection and therefore when on the day of judgment all will be made alive (John 5:28, 29; 1 Corinthians 15:22), over such the second death, the lake which burns with fire and brimstone will have no power, provided they had been faithful to the Lord, Who died to save them from the second death. (Revelation 2:10; 21:7),

# What Is Love?

J.C. Choate

We often speak of love. Preachers talk about it in their sermons. But to most people it is meaningless. They don't know what love is. Those who give always want something in return. Parents ignore their children and treat them as animals around the house. Wives are mistreated by their husbands. So, what is the solution?

First, let us define the term of love. There are many kinds of love. Most people think of love in the physical sense, that is, affectionate, erotic, and sexual. There is another kind of love that we have for our parents, our children, and our brothers and sisters. But the love that we are going to discuss at this time is agape love or the highest form of love. This is the kind of love that expresses itself for another in the sense that one thinks in the interest of the other person's welfare.

As an example of this love, think of God's love for man. In 1 John 4:8 the writer says, "He that loveth not' knoweth not God, for God is love. He didn't Just say that he loved us, but he showed his love by giving his Son. We must therefore think of him in those terms if we are to understand him. We read, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16). He continues by saying, "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved". (John 3:17). Again, John wrote, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10). So we are to love him because he first loved us. (1 John 4:19).

Next, let us see how Christ loved us by giving himself for us. Christ explained by saying, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13). Paul said, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to

die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:6-8). From these verses, and many others that could be given, we can surely see that Christ didn't just say that he loved us but he proved it. Furthermore, he didn't just die for the righteous, but for the ungodly. Now that took love.

While the Lord loves us, and has shown that love for us, he wants us to love him. When Christ was asked what the greatest commandment was, "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself". (Matthew 22:36-38). How can we show the Lord that we love him? Christ answers this by explaining to the early disciples, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15). The Lord has revealed his will to us and we must therefore learn what he wants us to do and then obey his commands. How can we say that we love him if we refuse to obey him? We can't.

Again, we are to love our neighbour or that person who needs help. We must also love our friends, our family members, our fathers and mothers, our husbands and wives, and our sons and our daughters.

We are to love the church, our leaders, our preachers and teachers, and the brotherhood. (1 Peter 2:17). And as Christ said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John 13:35).

Finally, we are to love the lost, and even our enemies. Christ said, "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you". (Matthew 5:44). But how can we love our enemies and those that we have never seen? We generally think of loving those that we know personally, those that we have affection and feelings for. But how can we love someone we have never seen or that person that is opposed to us? Keep in mind that the kind of love we are talking about is the

kind where one thinks of the other person's welfare. With that in mind, then we can see how it would be possible to love those who would be our enemies, that is, we are to return good for evil. Hear the words of Paul as he discusses these matters, "Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." (Romans 12:9-21).

We, therefore, are to love our enemies by doing those things that will be in his best interest, things that will be good for him. The same is true of those we have never met and that we do not personally know around the world. We are to love them by helping them, by taking the gospel to them so they may know God's will and have the opportunity to obey his will that they may be saved. Now that's love.

What kind of love do you have? Have you ever shown that love? Do you ever tell anyone that you love them? Try it and see if you don't find it to be very satisfying. This kind of love is not a sign of weakness but of strength. All of us need to practice this kind of love. It will change us, and as we practice it, it will change those around us for good.

# God Gives Us The Right To Choose

Clem Thurman

One of the greatest of challenges which God gave us was the right to choose. In Deut. 30:19-20 is found God's warning to Israel: "I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore choose life, that thou mayest live, thou and thy seed; to love Jehovah thy God, to obey his voice, and to cleave unto him; for he is thy life, and the length of thy days". After Moses, Joshua became Israel's leader and he warned them: "Choose you this day whom ye will serve . . . But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15).

God doesn't force a course of action upon us, He allows us to choose. Elijah lived in a time somewhat similar to ours; sex-oriented, unrestrained, skeptical, cynical. He also presented Israel with a choice, "How long go ye limping between the two sides? If Jehovah be God, follow him; if Baal, then follow him" (1 Kgs. 18:21). On the one hand they could choose idolatry, sensualism, materialism, license. On the other hand they could choose God, righteousness, purity, spirituality. The same choice is ours. As they had to choose, so must we.

## Any Choice is Easier when First Presented

A couple of years ago I poured a concrete slab for a yard building. Today my grand daughter walked by and laid her hand near the hand-imprint she left there two years ago. Today she left no mark, but the one she left two years ago is still plain to see. Once the concrete was set, it's form could not be altered without destroying it. The same principle is true with human minds and hearts. In childhood, the heart is pliable and impressionable. Later, it is "set" and nearly impossible to change. That is the reason Solomon wrote, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them" (Eccle. 12:1). Decisions made early in life are easier followed throughout life.

Every man is a creature of choice. Some deny that, saying we are merely products of blind chance: victims of heredity and/or environment. But that is just not true. God created man different from the other creatures of earth. Among the differences is that man is a free moral agent. He is not driven by blind instincts. Man can choose what he will do. God guides us, God pleads with us, God invites us, God persuades us: but God never forces man to do anything. We decide. Israel is an example for us. They were blessed of God, delivered by God, led by God. But they complained and rebelled until He rejected that generation (Num. 14). Then a warning is given to us: "While it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses" (Heb. 3:15-16). Listen to God, turn to God, "Today." The choice is easier when first presented to us.

In the early days of the church, Christians were sometimes called upon to suffer persecution. They were often told, "Renounce Christ and live". But they chose to confess Christ, and die for Him (Acts 7:59; 12:1-2). Jesus promised, "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 13:39). Paul must have remembered that promise as he wrote of himself, "What things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ, for whom I suffer the loss of all things . . . For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Phil. 3:7; Acts 21:13). He had committed himself to the Lord many years before. That decision, made when he first learned the gospel, was now "set" for life.

### Some Choices Demand Great Commitment

A great multitude followed Jesus, but His popularity dropped when He presented ideas that were difficult for them to accept. John records it: "Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst . . . I am the living bread which came down out of heaven . . . Many of his disciples, when they heard this, said, This is a hard saying; who can hear it? . . Upon this many of his



disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Jesus said therefore unto the twelve, Would ye also go away? Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou has the words of eternal life" (Jno. 6:35-69). A simple choice, but eternal in its consequences. Some decide to turn away, others decide to follow Jesus.

Jesus warned, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24). The apostle wrote later, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world . . . The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 Jno. 2:15-16). But the Lord doesn't choose for us, we must choose. A faithful disciple, co-worker with the apostle Paul, had to make a choice. Paul wrote the tragedy in only nine words, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2 Tim. 4:10). Some today make excuse, "It costs too much to be a Christian." But, in truth, they are like Demas: they love the world more than they love the Lord. It is a sad choice that results from such misplaced love.

There can be no compromise about choosing to live for Christ. No neutrality is possible, for we choose even if we try to refuse to choose! As Jesus said it, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth" (Lk. 11:23). It is either Christ or the world, not both. If we do not choose Christ, we automatically choose the world. And if we choose Christ, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice" (Rom. 12:1). That is a high price. But the other choice costs more!

### **The Choice Presented on Day of Pentecost**

In Jerusalem on that great day there were people from at least sixteen different nations (Acts 2:1-11), who came together in the temple area. The apostles preached, and each nationality heard, "every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born" (v. 8). Their amazement made them receptive to the message which Peter then preached: "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst

of you, even as ye yourselves know, him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay: whom God raised up" (Acts 2:22-24). Using Old Testament prophecy, and testimony of other apostles, he then concluded with this heart-shaking announcement; "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified" (Acts 2:36).

These men now had a clear-cut choice: they could ignore what had happened and what had been preached, or they could respond to it. "When they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins" (v. 37-38). Now they are faced with another choice, and their response is recorded: "They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls" (v. 41). They heard, they were cut to the heart, they were told to "repent and be baptized," and they did it! Clear choice, positive response.

### **The Choice the Lord Gives Us Today**

The Lord told the apostles, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be condemned" (Mk. 16:15-16). They preached it just as the Lord told them. On Pentecost, three thousand "made the choice" to become followers of Christ. The gospel hasn't changed: the conditions are the same, the promises are the same. Therefore, our choice is exactly the same as they had. We can choose to do what the Lord says, or we can reject His salvation. That's it. No neutrality: "He that is not with me is against me". When they heard the gospel, they put their trust in Jesus Christ and were baptized into Him (Acts 2:36-41; 8:5, 12; 8:35-39; 16:30-34; 22:16; etc.). Or they made the other choice: "When I have a convenient season, I will call" (Acts 24:25).

Early in the second century, the aged Polycarp was arrested

by the Romans and told, "Say 'Lord Caesar' and live; refuse and die". Polycarp replied, "If you vainly suppose that I will swear by the genius of Caesar, as you say, then listen plainly, I am a Christian!" He was immediately condemned to be burned at the stake. Had he deliberately chosen death? NO! He had chosen life, the only choice he could make that would result in ETERNAL LIFE.

God still speaks, "I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse: therefore choose life, that thou mayest live, thou and thy seed; to love Jehovah thy God, to obey his voice, and to cleave unto him; for he is thy life" (Deut. 30:19-20). May we have the courage to make the right choice, to live for Him so that we may live with Him.

## Where Are The Dead?

Roy Beasley

I wish to discuss a question that intrigues both the young and the old: where are the dead? Man is a composite being, composed of a body and a soul. "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." (Gen. 2:7). The body is temporal but the soul is eternal. The body dies and decays, but the soul will live eternally.

Our concern is not with what happens to the body at death, but what becomes of the soul. Where does the soul go? It does not go into the grave. This is apparent from the fact that the spirit becomes separated from the body and that it is the body that goes into the grave.

The soul does not go into a purgatorial realm. The superstition that those guilty of certain sins go into purgatory to suffer punishment for a time in order to be purified arose from the dark ages. There is no hint of such in the word of God. Neither does the soul go directly to heaven or to hell at death.

Just before his death on the cross, Jesus said to the penitent

thief, "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." Jesus said the penitent thief went to paradise that day. Yet, three mornings later, on the first day of the week, Jesus appeared unto Mary Magdalene in the garden and said, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father . . ." (Jno. 20:17). Jesus and the thief journeyed to paradise on Friday, but on the first day of the week, he said that he had not yet gone to the Father. Hence, paradise is not where God dwells.

Where is paradise? If we can learn where the soul of Jesus went when he died, we would know the answer. In Acts 2:26-27, Peter quoted the prophecy of David concerning the resurrection of Christ. The word hell in the King James Version is actually the word Hades. Hades is the realm of the departed spirits. Jesus and the thief went into Hades; this is where paradise is located.

What is the Hadean world like? Are there any passages that tell us? I'm glad to say that there are. In the 16th. chapter of Luke, Lazarus died and was taken to a place called Abraham's bosom; the rich man died and lifted up his eyes in torment. The rich man begged Father Abraham to send Lazarus to dip his finger in water to cool his tormented tongue, but Abraham explained that this was impossible because of the abyss. He then pleaded with Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his brothers on earth, but Abraham said that they had Moses and the prophets. From this we learn that when the spirit is separated from the body, the body goes into the grave but the spirit wings its way into the Hadean world. The righteous go to that place called Paradise or Abraham's bosom and the wicked go into torment. There is a great gulf fixed separating these two places. The disembodied spirits shall recognize each other in the Hadean world and shall know what occurs here on earth.

We know that this was not the eternal state of the rich man and Lazarus because life was still on earth; the judgment had not come. As a matter of fact this was before the Christian age. Abraham said that his brothers could hear Moses and the prophets. If the Christian age had begun, he would have said, "They have Christ and the apostles."

Someone will ask, "If all of this is true why would a judgment be necessary?" We must not assume that God will hold court and hear testimony before he pronounces a verdict of guilty or not guilty. We are on trial now, and when we die our destiny is irrevocable. At the judgment the Judge will make a formal announcement of sentence. The righteous will go to heaven to be with God eternally but the lost will go to hell eternally to be with the devil and his angels.

## "I Don't Know Much Bible"

Edsel Burleson

More than likely it hasn't been very long since you heard someone say, "I don't know much about the Bible." The statement comes unapologetically from young and old alike, freely admitting ignorance of the grandest and most important book known to man. It is unbelievable that intelligent men and women can so neglectfully and unashamedly pass by the opportunity to learn from this book that could mean so much to them.

Someone gave a fairly accurate picture of many professed Christians in this verse:

"I know the latest recipes by heart;  
I can tell all the movie stars apart;  
I know all the new programs on TV;  
I know all the ballplayers from A to Z;  
I know every big-wig in this town;  
I know the bargain prices up and down;  
But when it comes to scripture I'm not reliable;  
It seems I can't ever Remember the BIBLE."

Paul tells us, All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine for reproof, for correction, for in-

struction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Timothy 2:16, 17.)

Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4.) He also warned: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." (John 12:48.)

We are told that a bird can go nine days without food, a dog—twenty days, a snake—eight hundred days, a fish—one thousand days, and some insects—twelve thousand days. For man, however, two months is about the limit. Sooner or later nourishment is necessary for all of God's creatures.

This illustrates the tremendous need all of us have for "food for the soul." Yet, many are starving to death, not because food is not available, but because they will not eat. True, they "don't know much about the Bible." Someone has said, "A Bible on the shelf is of no more value than food in the refrigerator."

An elderly lady sat reading her Bible, as she did several times a day, when her grandson said, "Why do you waste so much time reading the Bible? You don't remember what you've read; why don't you just quit?"

The old lady said nothing, but went outside and returned with a bushel basket. "Here, son, take this old dirty potato basket over to the pump and fill it with water."

It took some persuading, but finally he went over to the well and began to pump. No matter how hard he labored, all the water ran through, after a time he was told he could stop. He insisted, "I tried Grandma, I really did! But the basket just won't hold water."

The grandmother took the basket and examined it carefully. Then she said kindly, "I know, my son, but look how much cleaner it is now!" Then she added, "The scriptures can be like that water. Let them run through your mind, and even though

they may not stay there, don't say they do no good. They leave the mind clean as the water left the basket clean."

Don't starve your soul! Feed on the word of God and grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour.

## God's Word Speaks With Complete Authority

Rodney Cheatham

In Proverbs 30:5-6, Solomon said, "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."

There are many things in life of which we cannot be certain. However, we can know without the slightest doubt that God's word is absolutely true and pure. We can know without any hesitancy that the Bible is perfect from cover to cover. There are no "ifs," or "maybes," but everything is according to the will of God.

### CREED BOOKS ARE NOT NEEDED

We can trust completely in the Bible to be inspired and the authority of God. He is a shield to us when we place all our confidence in him. We don't need the opinions of men with their creeds, manuals, prayer books, disciplines and such like to take the place of the scriptures.

There are many who place more trust in books written by the opinions of men than they do the Bible. Please realize, however, that no book written by the opinions of men will save us. In every case they either add to, or take from the word of God.

We cannot substitute what God has said by inserting what man thinks. Every creed book has a different doctrine, yet each claims to be right and in harmony with God's teachings. The

serious Bible student can see, though, that man-made doctrines cannot be correct while they differ with each other and conflict with the scriptures. There is no creed book or rule of faith that can take the place of the Bible and save our souls. If a creed book says more than the Bible, it says too much. If it says less, it doesn't say enough. If it says exactly what the Bible says it is correct. Should this be the case, a creed book would not be needed for the Bible is all sufficient.

## SCRIPTURES UPHOLD THE BIBLE'S AUTHORITY

God has been very specific as to how we are to handle his word. Let us notice some additional passages which show us we are not to alter the Bible.

"Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you". (Deuteronomy 4:2).

"For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." (Revelation 22:18, 19).

We can see by these verses and others that God wants us to accept his law as perfect and complete. Man has no business tampering with God's laws. He assures us that his word is complete. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost". (2 Peter 1:20-21).



There should be no doubt from the reading of these verses that the Bible is anything but perfect and authoritative.

The New Testament is our guide in the Christian age because it contains God's plan of salvation. There are not many ways to salvation, for God has but one plan. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me". (John 14:6). There is but one plan of salvation. It is not found in some creed book, but through our obedience to the gospel. We will be wise in following God's plan.

## Do You Believe in Miracles?

Charles Cook

According to Webster's Dictionary a miracle is "an event in the physical world that surpasses all known human or natural powers and is ascribed to a divine or supernatural cause" In the Bible they are called "signs, wonders and gifts of the Holy Spirit (spiritual gifts)" (Hebrews 2:4; 1 Corinthians 12:4—11). No where in Scripture do we read of miracles being performed solely to heal the sick, feed the hungry or even to raise the dead . . . they were given always to show the presence and power of God. The signs and wonders performed by Jesus left no doubt but that the power of God was in Him. Miracles were performed by many Old Testament men to show that they were being "moved along by the Holy Spirit" (II Peter 1:21). The message preached and now preserved in the New Testament was confirmed by the "signs and wonders" done by the Apostles and Prophets of the early church (Hebrews 2:1—4). We now have the inspired Will of God, fully confirmed by miracles, which is able to provide all that is necessary to bring us to salvation in Christ (Jude 3; II Timothy 3:16, 17; John 20:30, 31).

God, having delivered His Will to mankind and having supported it by miracles, no longer has a need for these supernatural acts. Thus, Paul stated that a time would come when the spiritual gifts would cease. (I Corinthians 13:8-13). When the

“perfect” arrived (what ever that was, i.e., the completed New Testament, mature Christianity, etc.) the time of miracles ended. No matter how obscure our understanding or what the “perfect” refers to, this much we know, that when the Apostles died so did the supernatural gifts. It is made abundantly clear in Acts 8:18 that miracle working abilities in the early church came only through the “laying on of the APOSTLES HANDS.” When the Apostles died and the New Testament was completed . . . miracles ceased.

But it is argued today that the commission and promise made by Jesus in Mark 16:14-20 is still in force and, therefore, miracles are still happening. In the interest of dealing with this proposition, let us make a contextual study of this Mark passage. There will be no discussion as to whether or not this passage belongs in the original text. (see NASV footnotes).

Verses 14 and 19 make it clear that Jesus was speaking to the eleven Apostles on this occasion. Some have reasoned that if the signs of verses 17 and 18 apply only to the Apostles, then the commission of verses 15 and 16 likewise apply only to the Apostles. But, they argue, if verses 15 and 16 apply to every believer throughout the entire Christian Era, then so do verses 17 and 18. Hence, the Charismatics believe they have a Scriptural case proving that miracles should be performed in our day.

Actually, the passage teaches just the opposite of what they say; it teaches that the signs were only for the Apostolic Age. Verse 14 says Jesus spoke to “the eleven”, meaning the Apostles less Judas. In verse 15 He commissioned them to “preach the gospel to every creature”. Verse 16 relates that “he (every creature) that believeth and is baptized shall be saved . . .” Paul said in II Corinthians 5:14ff that every Christian has been given “the ministry of reconciliation” and that we are therefore compelled by Christ’s love to preach the gospel to all. It stands to reason that “every creature” who believes and obeys the gospel is automatically commissioned to share it with others who are lost! But, does verse 17 teach that “every creature” who believes and obeys the gospel must perform signs such as those described in verses 17 and 18?

The answer to the above question is : NO ! "Them" of verse 17 is the antecedent of "the eleven" of verse 14, and they are the ones who will perform signs to confirm the message preached. As we before indicated, the Apostles could lay hands on believers of that day and give them the ability to confirm their inspired preaching with miracles, but only an Apostle could give that power (Acts 8:9-19). If anyone is performing miracles today he had to receive the power to do so from an Apostle of Jesus!

The gospel "they" (Apostles) began to preach and confirm by working wonders, such as described in verses 17 and 18, is the same gospel we are to believe and preach today. That gospel, once confirmed in Apostolic Days by miracles, does not need to be confirmed over and over in every age by signs being worked by all believers. Jude 3 mentions "the faith (noun form meaning the message) ONCE (Greek HAPAX meaning for all time) delivered to the saints".

If one holds the position that believers throughout the New Testament Age are to work miracles he is forced to the conclusion that every believer from the Apostles on MUST perform signs as proof of his belief. This would be a ridiculous position because all who do not work signs would be automatically classified as unbelievers. Mark 16:20 forever ruins that idea because it shows exactly who went forth confirming their words by signs the "they" of verse 20 refers only to the Apostles . . . not all believers for all time!

We are urging people not to get caught up in the Pentecostal/Charismatic Movements that places almost total emphasis on speaking in tongues and working miracles. Jesus promised signs only to the Apostles. They passed them on to a number of the early believers like Stephen and Philip (Acts 6:6). But those early Christians could not extend those powers to others, that could only be done by the Apostles (Acts 8:18). In 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 Paul said the signs would cease. They did cease with the death of the Apostles. Today we have salvation through belief and obedience to the gospel they confirmed. We believe in those miracles which confirmed the Bible. Now let us fully believe by trusting and obeying the Lord Jesus Christ to the end.

# Detecting And Maintaining True Christianity From Counterfeit

G.N. Chauhan

It is the specific aim of the church of Christ to maintain and uphold historic, pure Christianity and to be able to detect its counterfeit in all its varied forms in the guise of denominationalism. It is our fervent plea that searching the Scriptures diligently for the truth is the need of the hour. Jesus said, "... ye shall know the truth" and we believe this.

We endeavour to reproduce the Christianity the disciples of Christ practised in the first century before apostasy entered the events of history, Restoration, yes! Not reformation of denominationalism. We plead for becoming Christians the right way, just as people in the first century became Christians when they heard the gospel preached to them, believed it, obeyed it and were saved and added to the one and only church of the Bible or the Lord's church with Jesus as the builder and founder of it. We endeavour to worship, practise, organise and stick to the same purity of doctrine of Christ, maintaining the same unity and working the works they did. We teach what they taught, speaking as the oracles of God, and seeing to no implantation of our own thoughts about what the Scriptures say.

Our unity is based on Jesus' words and His Bible—the only rule book of our faith and practice. We totally dispense with human creeds, precepts, tampering of the Bible, traditions, additions, subtractions, substitutions; ever mindful of strictly maintaining its (Bible's) pristine purity. We know unity comes only when we believe, teach and practise the same things; same mind, same judgment, same faith, same rule are imperatives (Jn. 17:19-21; 1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 1:27; 2:2; 3:16).

To Christ alone belongs pre-eminence. He is the head of the church, not human figureheads with headquarters in various locations on earth. Glory and honour belong rightly to Christ

(Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22, 23; Phil. 2:10, 11). Christ is King (1 Tim. 6:15). He has all authority (Matt. 28:18).

His church is His Bride (Eph. 5:22, 23) and we plead with all that they also could be members of His Bride. Christ is head of His Body, which is the church (Eph. 1:22) and purchased the church with His blood (Acts 20:28). Thus we plead with all to become blood-bought. Christ is the Saviour of His church (Eph. 5:23), so we plead that you too be a member of His church in order to be saved.

We plead with all to submit to the New Testament law of Jesus Christ, the perfect law of liberty (Jas. 1:25). We plead with all to join us in the service of Jesus our Lord. To plead with all to preach the gospel, the truth, the faith, the word, when all around us we see thousands daily dying without Christ. Christ died for them just as He died for us. To fight against social evils—gambling, drunkenness, crimes and violence, oppression of the minorities, ignorance and superstition, poverty and hunger. To be in the army of Christ, but can be only if you enlist!

We plead with all to worship as did the Apostles, and disciples did likewise and so do we in the churches of Christ throughout the earth.

If you can meet these conditions, which are really simple, you can be enlisted. Think on these steps and act. Don't delay. You have everything to gain and nothing to lose.

1. To have unshakeable, unwavering faith in Jesus Christ (Jn. 3:36).
2. You must renounce former master—Satan, and his manner of life in totality. This is repentance (Acts 17:30; Lk. 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19).
3. You must be born again to walk in the newness of life. Born of "water and the Spirit" (Jn. 3:5). Paul described it "buried with Him in baptism!" (Rom. 6:3, 4).

This is the way Christians are made and were made from the first century on till this day till Christ's return.

# The Deceitfulness Of Sin!

Dillard Thurman

We are warned, "Exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin". (Heb. 3:11-12), To this we can add: "Lest Satan should get the advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices". (2 Cor. 2:11). We must be constantly guarding, "For your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour". (1 Pet 5:8). There are valid reasons for the child of God to be on guard against the devil and sin! Think of all the ills man has suffered because of sin's deceitfulness! Sin is far more dangerous than it appears at first. You have only to follow the devil's trail, and view the wreckage wrought by sin! Its tragic results have plagued the story of man on earth!

"The deceitfulness of sin" is shown in its very first appearance! Adam and Eve were placed in the garden of Eden, and had access to all of its provisions. But sin entered in by deception, and the catalogue of ills and pains fell upon mankind. The terrible effects of sin is seen on every hand. To paint the true picture of sin, you would have to capture every hurt, pain, disappointment, broken home, sickness, regret, the wail of each sorrowing mother, the whine of each lost child, the anguish of each broken-hearted father, the sob of each bereaved spouse, and the echo of sorrow with each death, and the agony of the tomb! And yet men persist in sin, being "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin".

## Sin Deceives by Perverting God's Word!

The devil appeared unto Adam and Eve in Eden in the form of the serpent; not as a roaring, terrible lion! It was not a frontal attack as might be suspected. "Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field", (Gen. 3:1), and craftily directed their temptation! God had told Adam and Eve about the tree of knowledge of good and evil, stating: "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17). But the devil altered this just slightly, saying, "Ye shalt not surely die". (Gen. 3:4).

This is what God said, except for that one word, **NOT!** Satan was deceitful in changing just one small word, but in doing so, he changed Life into Death! Just one small change, but that change brought death upon the human race that has reigned for almost 7,000 years! The deceitfulness of sin is still evident in perverting the Word of God to destroy its life-giving message to lost men!

To this day, the devil is using the same devices! His tactics have not changed. God's word declares: "Baptism doth also now save us". (1 Pet. 3:21). That's plain, and easy to be understood. But the devil plays tricks with this also! He has his henchmen preaching, "Baptism doth **NOT** save us". That same 3-letter word, **NOT**, is inserted again, and God's word is perverted, truth is defeated, and souls are destroyed! These false teachers teach just the opposite to what God has said, but they do so deceitfully! And for another example: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4). Do you find this hard to understand? It is quite clear and plain. But the Devil enters the picture and perverts the word! His false teachers preach, "It is impossible to fall from grace!" The devices of Satan have not changed, and sin is still deceitful! God says, "Ye are fallen from grace", and they say, "That's impossible"! Now, which will you believe? Again we warn you of the deceitfulness of sin!

### **Sin Changes God's Truth into a Lie!**

God's truth was turned into a lie by Satan in Eden, but how often the devil has done so since! We read of a young prophet who cried out against Jeroboam's altar in Bethel. God had told him to do this, and then return without eating. An old prophet heard of this, overtook him on the way home, saying, "An angel of the Lord spake unto me", and then insisted that he return and eat. The young prophet believed him: "But he lied unto him", and just a few hours later a lion stood guard over his corpse! (1 Kgs. 13). Sin destroyed a prophet because he believed a lie rather than trusting God's word! He paid with his life! Is that a lesson for us?

One should expect such a lie from the devil. Jesus said of

false teachers in His day: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do . . . When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." (Jno. 8:44). Neither the devil nor his henchmen have disassociated themselves from this practice! We are warned that a false teacher is "after the working of Satan with all power and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness". (2 Thess. 2:9-11). The deceitfulness of sin is that it can appear to make religious error seem like it is truth! The devil still has many false teacher working on that project! "For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth". (2 Tim. 3:6-7). God's truth is distorted as they hold a form of godliness, but deny its power (v. 5).

### **Sin Appeals to Basic Lusts!**

We are warned against loving the world, and especially "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 Jno. 2:15-17). It was by these three avenues that sin deceived Eve! "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." (Gen. 3:6). The whole panorama of sinfulness was thus introduced into the world! Notice the means of temptation: "the tree was good for food" [lust of the flesh], "it was pleasant to the eyes" [lust of the eyes], "a tree to be desired to make one wise" (pride of life). This was the beginning of sin; but every sin since then has come through one of these three avenues of temptation! Take, for example, the temptations of Jesus. After fasting forty days and nights, He hungered. It was then the tempter said, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread". Sin approached through lust of the flesh! Next He was set on the pinnacle of the



temple, and challenged to cast Himself down that angels might save Him. This time temptation came by pride of life! Lastly, the devil showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and offered them to Him if He would worship him. His eyes beheld kingdoms of power, combining lusts of the eyes and pride of life. (Account from Matthew 4). In each of these temptations, sin is deceptively simple: but the result of sin is no less deadly!

The lust of the flesh is used in gawdy advertising on TV, magazine ads, and display of tempting foods, with every creature comfort. The "good life" is painted in lavish display of fine liquors, cigarettes, banquets and feasting. But it is also presented in basic lusts, where the desires of the flesh are satiated in immoral, adulterous activities. "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers nor abusers of themselves with mankind . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Cor. 6:9-10). Sin may appear appealing and gratifying to the flesh: but it will also cause its destruction in hell!

The Lusts of the eyes will also be appealed to by TV, magazine ads, and the display of nudity on the beach! There are sinful scenes that will meet our eyes, and yet we must guard against them by shunning the appearance of evil! Hear Jesus: "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." (Mt. 5:28). Is it easier now to understand the charge: "Keep thy heart with all diligence"? And don't say we can't control our thoughts, for we must learn to shun the evil! We have been sufficiently supplied to bring "into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (2 Cor. 10:5). "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." (Mt. 5:29). Sin can present things pleasant to look upon: but yet death stalks the scene!

The pride of life is shown in the inordinate desire for worldly praise and honors. God's preachers at one time were self-styled "servants" and "bond servants". Paul used such, not as a title, but a term of self-renunciation! But today, ecclesiastes seek to be

called "Reverend," or if that be unacceptable, then they wear the title "Doctor." But Jesus taught, "But ye are brethren." The pride of life is seen in the quest some make to be "an elder." Sure, I agree men should desire the work—but not the "title" nor the "power." It is no ego-position for self esteem! This pride of life may be shown in the house we live in, the car we drive, or the clothes we wear! Sin is deceitful; it doesn't have to dangle a kingdom and a throne! It may offer just a step up the social ladder that is used to remove one from Christ! John concluded his writing on the avenues of sin, saying, "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever". (1 Jno. 2:17).

### **The Deceitfulness of Riches!**

Along with this study, we must especially warn of coveteousness: the inordinate desire for riches! Jesus spoke of "the deceitfulness of riches" (Mt. 13:22; Mk. 4:12), as that which would choke the word of life, and cause one to be unfruitful. He warned: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth . . . But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven . . . For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Mt. 6:19-21). Paul tells us: "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (1 Tim. 6:9-10). This is such an innocuous, insidious evil! Surely, we should make all the money we can—if done honestly, and for the purpose of better serving God! But it is so easy to loose sight of the fact that it is only a tool God puts in the hands of His steward! It is not how much money a man has: it is how much of a man money has! Riches can be deceitful, in that it can blind one to the One who has blessed him with wealth! In His judgment, we would give 10,000 worlds like this, and all their wealth, just to hear Him say: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," rather than "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." Beware of the deceitfulness of sin, and of riches!

## The Ravages of Deceitful Sin!

The Christian must have knowledge of what sin is, and also its bad effect upon him! "He that committeth sin is of the devil: for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." (1 Jno. 3:8). If we have not departed from sin, to live in righteousness, then the purpose of Christ's coming is thwarted! Recall the scene in the garden of Eden as you read: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." (2 Cor. 11:3). Don't be deceived by the devil; don't be moved from the simplicity of the gospel; and don't be destroyed through the deceitfulness of sin!

## The Incorruptible Crown

W. Edwin Kearley

Paul wrote. "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible." (2 Corinthians 9:24-25). The Greeks were involved very much in athletics. Paul used their association with athletics to teach spiritual truths.

### ONE CANNOT WIN THE RACE UNLESS HE ENTERS THE RACE

Many who have the ability to train and win will not enter athletic races. There are many who can enter the spiritual race and win but do not do so. Many excuses are made for failing to obey the gospel of Christ. Some of the excuses are ignorance, bad people in the church, afraid they can not live the Christian life, etc. The underlying reasons are a lack of faith in God and his promises and a lack of belief in a devil's hell which burns with fire and brimstone.

Obedience to the first principles of the gospel is in essential to

enter into the spiritual race. The faith necessary is obtained from a study of God's revelation to man. (Romans 10:17). Repentance must come from within the individual prompted by his faith and realization of guilt. (2 Corinthians 7:9-10). Faith causes one to announce to his fellow man his faith in Christ. This is called confession. (Romans 10:9-10). Baptism is the final act which puts one into Christ, (Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:26-27). Christ shed his blood in his death and we are baptized into his death. (Romans 6:3). The Lord adds the saved to the church. (Acts 2:47).

### EVERYONE, WHO ENTERS THE RACE, CAN RECEIVE THE PRIZE

Those in the race are not in competition with each other. Each participant must follow the rules. Paul said, "If a man also strive for the masteries yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully". (2 Timothy 2:5). Many religious people are striving, but not lawfully.

It is not he who begins but he who finishes that will be crowned! Jesus said, "... be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life". (Revelation 2:10).

### THOSE WHO STRIVE MUST BE TEMPERATE IN ALL THINGS

A temperate person is one who is self-restrained. This is one of the fruits of the spirit (Galatians 5:23). The American Standard Version translates it "self-control". Paul speaks of this truth when he said, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Romans 12:1, 2).

### THE PRIZE IS AN INCORRUPTIBLE CROWN

Paul wrote Timothy from a Roman cell, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing". (2 Timothy 2:6-8). Paul called it an incorruptible crown. (1 Corinthians 9:25).

If you have not entered the spiritual race, please do it now! Failure to do so means eternal ruin!