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# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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Vol. 30

February 2000

No. 10

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## EDITORIAL

### ***What Does The Bible Teach?***

***"For the love of Christ constrains us, because we judge thus that if one died for all, then all died"***

The word constrain means to force or to compel. And, it was the love of Christ, said the apostle Paul, that constrained him that he should preach the gospel of Christ to all people everywhere; no matter how they treat or mistreat him or how much hardships he had to go through; or whatever he had to suffer at the hand of the very people whom he was preaching the gospel of Christ's love; but he was compelled, said he, was force or constrained by the love of Christ that he must preach His Good News. Because Christ came loving, He did only good to all, yet He was despised and crucified. And Paul knew why? He wrote at another place, "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man, but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief". (1 Timothy 1: 12-15). Paul knew that He was not worthy of

the love of God or Christ, but yet He loved him and died on the cross to save him from sin. Paul thus understood the meaning of the love of Christ.

He wrote, further, "And He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore, 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 who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him". (2 Corinthians 5: 14-21).

Some times people wonder, marvel and are astonishingly amazed when they see some individuals come from far countries; leaving their homes and families and comforts; and living in strange places with strangers of another language and culture; going through many problems and even painful sufferings, mentally or physically; but they have only one aim: to preach Christ and Him crucified, by what they say and do. The only true answer to this is, that they do all what they do because the love of Christ constrains them to do that. Such is the great power of the love of Christ! When one truly experiences the power of the love of Christ, it constrains him to share His Good News with others. And no power on earth can stop that individual. In fact, asked Paul, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" "For I am persuaded," he said, "that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8: 35-39).

# *Does God Speak Directly to Us Today?*

J.C. CHOATE

Christ prepared His 12 apostles to carry on His work when He returned to God in heaven. But they were only human, and He knew it would be impossible for them to remember all that He had said to them. In human error, they might even have taught false doctrines. To prevent such tragic and eternal problems, Jesus promised to send the Comforter, or the Holy Spirit, to lead the apostles into all truth. He said, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in MY name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). Again, He said, "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all the truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come" (John 16:13).

On the day of Pentecost, the apostles were gathered in Jerusalem, as Jesus had instructed them, when suddenly the Holy Spirit was poured out on them from God. Being baptized with the Spirit, as had been promised, they were now able to miraculously speak in the languages of those who were gathered there (Acts 2:4-8). They were also able to heal the sick, raise the dead, and to speak the truths of God by the direction of the Holy Spirit, as Jesus had promised. Through that power, they wrote the books of the New Testament, without human error and without contradiction.

Now, what were the reasons for these miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit?

- Jesus had returned to heaven and was not there to guide the apostles.
- the church was begun with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and divine guidance was needed to ensure that all practices and teachings with regard to the church be without human error.
- As the apostles and their converts moved about the

world, preaching the good news of salvation, they proved themselves to be of God by the miracles they were able to perform.

- ❑ The New Testament Scriptures had not yet been written. It was through the Holy Spirit that this was done, as the apostles penned the "God-breathed" words.
- ❑ The writings of the New Testament were confirmed to be the word of God by the miraculous signs done by the writers (Mark 16:20).
- ❑ During this infant stage of the church, before the Scriptures had been completed, there was a critical need for inspired guidance in the various congregations as they were scattered throughout the world. By prayer and the laying on of the apostles' hands (Acts 8:14-18), individual miraculous gifts were given to Christians, to enable them to provide the correct leadership (1 Corinthians 12:4-13). There is no record anywhere in the New Testament which shows that anyone other than the apostles could give these miraculous gifts; therefore, when the apostles died, and those to whom they had given gifts died, the miraculous age ceased. The reason for this was not that God would be limiting Himself, but that the Scriptures were then complete. His written word was to be the guide for all men, for all time.

Regarding the completeness of God's revealed message in the New Testament, we read, "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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

How do we, today, learn God's will? how do we develop faith? the answer is given in Romans 10:17: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God".

Yet many religious people today claim that God Speaks directly to them, giving them new revelations, words that were not written in the New Testament. Are their claims true? Does the Holy Spirit talk to people individually during this time? Does He give one instruction to one man and a contradictory instruction to another? When these religious leaders claim to be

speaking by inspiration, yet the message of their "gospel" conflicts with what has already been written and confirmed in the New Testament, are these men speaking the truth?

Paul warns, "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8).

"We also have the prophetic word made more sure, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place . . . knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you. . ." (2 Peter 1:19-21; 2:1).

The closing words of the Scriptures, Revelation 22:18, 19, warn that nothing is to be added to or taken from what has been revealed. God's message for mankind is complete. Those who claim to speak new words from Him today are speaking the words of their own imagination. They are deceived and they deceive those who believe them. If you want to know what God has said, go to the Bible and let Him speak to you through those inspired pages.

*Especially For Women*

## **Jesus—The Christ** **Part 3**

**BETTY BURTON CHOATE**

Andrew asked, as he and Rachel took up their materials to continue the study of Christ, "Let's pray especially tonight that God will help us now and in the days to come, as we study this subject that is so vital to our salvation, that we will be able to understand what is revealed in the Scriptures, and that we won't be blinded by what we've only *thought* in the past."

"I agree," Rachel answered. "Realizing the relationship in

the Godhead from eternity, and the work of the Word in the Old Testament, is helping me to appreciate more fully the complete change that took place when He was born as a human. Since we had read that part in John 8 last night, I was just re-reading the book of John today while Timothy was having his bath. The difference between the way He spoke as God in the Old Testament and as the *Son* of God in the New Testament is amazing."

After praying, Andrew turned to the book of John and began to read aloud. "You're exactly right Rachel!" he exclaimed after reading only a few minutes. "I am going to mark the verses where He says He was *sent by the Father*, or that He came to do *the Father's will*, or that the words and works He did were *from the Father*. In every statement He is expressing His subjection to God. And look here in verse 26 of chapter 5: '*For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself.*' Jesus was saying that even as a man, and as the Son subjected to the Father, He had the power of life—a characteristic inherent only in Deity, in God. But He said He had that power *because the Father had granted it!*"

"Yet in John 1:4, speaking of the Word as he has existed from eternity, it says, '*In Him was life.*'—not life through being granted it by God, but the power of life *within Himself!* Is this one of the effects of emptying Himself, as we read the other night in Philippians 2?"

"I think it must be," Andrew answered. "And the verse in Hebrews (2:17) that talks of Him being made in all things *like His brethren* must have literal meaning: that He laid aside all the powers and rights that were His as the Word, and made Himself completely dependent on God, just as humans are dependent! What a change!"

"But how did He do the miracles, if He wasn't using His own power?" puzzled Rachel.

Andrew sat quietly for several minutes, thinking deeply. "I've wondered about Jesus' statements, here in Matthew 12:24-32, where the Pharisees accused Him of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub. He said in verse 28 that He was doing those things by the Spirit of God. Then He said that words of blasphemy spoken *against Himself* would be forgiven, but in



verse 32 He warned, '*... but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.*' Jesus was one of the Godhead, and the Holy Spirit was also one of the Godhead. Why would blasphemy against Jesus be forgiven, but not blasphemy against the Holy Spirit?

"You were asking, Rachel, by *whose* power Jesus did His Miracles, if He had laid aside His own powers in order to be dependent on God, as His human brethren would be dependent? This Scripture—and all His other statements—show that, truly, it was by the Holy Spirit that he did everything. People looking at Him in the flesh could be forgiven for not realizing that He was actually One of the Godhead, because He *looked like other men*; but *no human* could do the works He was doing, ***works that He repeatedly attributed to the power of the Holy Spirit.*** If people could look at those wonders, and say, 'This is being done by Satan's power!' what further power could God use to convince them? That's why they wouldn't be forgiven!"

"So all of these verses which show Jesus' oneness with humans do have literal meaning?" Rachel asked. "He *emptied Himself*, He learned *obedience* to the Father, He *was made in all things like His brethren*, He *died* instead of us to take our sins, and so that we can live with Him!

"Andrew, I'd always thought of Christ sitting at the right hand of His Father *before He was born in the flesh*. That was just an assumption, as these Scriptures have shown. Now I'm wondering if my thinking about Him during *this age* is correct. After His resurrection, did things go back as they had been *before He came into the world*?"

"We've found only statements of equality before His birth, though we did see that even in the Old Testament He was working in the role of Mediator, and that He was sent by God. Yet, when He spoke, the tone and authority couldn't be distinguished from the Person of the Godhead who *became the Father!* Not having yet *emptied Himself*, He was truly equal, though each Person had individual work to do. But the picture of *the son* seated at the right hand of *the Father* is found only in the New Testament revelation, so far as I remember."

"I'm thinking of two verses—Mathew 28:18 and Philippians 2:9," Rachel said. "When Jesus was about to ascend to Heaven,

He said, "All authority has been given to Me..." and in Philippians Paul wrote that because of Jesus' obedience "... God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name..." These verses are talking of His relationship now, they are not describing the equality He had with God in the beginning. True, He now has all authority and He has been highly exalted above all else, but this authority and glory had been inherently His as One of the Godhead from eternity. These verses say that he now holds this authority and exaltation because of His obedience and because God has given it to Him! That's an entirely different thing!"

"Is all of this saying that the 33 years Jesus lived in a human body and the death He died for us were not the end of the sacrifice?" asked Andrew.

"Always I've thought His death was the sacrifice," replied Rachel. "But maybe we haven't paid close enough attention to what the Scriptures are actually saying. If He was equal from eternity, and not the Son at the right hand of the Father, then it means that even when He ascended to heaven, everything didn't go back to the way it was. It means that some changes continued."

"You know we've talked about 'the Word' acting as the Mediator in the Old Testament period, before He was born as the Son. But do you remember 1 Timothy 2:5? 'For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.' That verse is describing present tense—now—and it is as a man that He mediates between God and us! Even now, He is still the brother of man!"

"What a sobering thought, Andrew!"

## Warnings Of The Bible

FRANCIS DAVID

Recently, we have seen nature's worst disaster, the terrible cyclone in the state of Orissa. This cyclone was one of the worst one in the history. Some now call it the super cyclone. This

cyclone has destroyed property worth crores and there are so many people who have lost their lives. It would take many many years to rebuild the state and to bring it to normal shape. I heard on the radio and television news, some people were saying that enough warning was not given, but the administration claimed that they had timely informed the people but they did not heed to the warning and they did not want to leave their homes and belongings" and we see when the cyclone came they were perished. It is really very sad that so many lives have been lost and we feel very sorry for the people of Orissa.

Do you know, the Bible also gives us some warnings? The word of God was written by the inspiration and all these warnings are serious and genuine. In Second Timothy three sixteen we read, it says: "All Scriptures is given by inspiration of God. . ." God himself gave these warnings but worlds of people today do not heed to these biblical warnings. Those who do not heed to these warnings have to face the eternal damnation. The Bible says one day we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. "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. Knowing therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences. (2 Cor. 5:10-11).

The Bible tells us, that there is one gospel (Good news). The good news is that Jesus died, was buried and was risen from the dead on the third day (1 Cor. 15:1-4). The Salvation is in Jesus name and there is no other name given to men (Acts 4:12). If a person wants to obey the gospel he must believe and be baptised and this what we read in Mark 16:16. Many do not accept that baptism is for Salvation. They teach "just simply believe in Jesus and you will be saved." The command of the gospel is to believe and be baptised. But listen what apostle Paul says: Which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worth of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled with us when Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those

who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, these shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. (2 Thess. 1:5-9). We believe and the Bible says one day Lord Jesus will come back and would take his church with Him. "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God and the dead in Christ, will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and thus we shall always be with the Lord". (1 Thess. 4:16-17). yes, the Lord will come suddenly, Nobody knows when, but He will come as a thief in the night and this what apostle Peter tells us, he says: "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. (2 Pet. 3:9-10). This is a pretty strong warning and we must not ignore it. The Lord is not slack. He will do his job. Have we done what the Lord expect us to do? Paul tells to the Christians at Thesslonica, by saying: "For you know yourselves perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night, for when they say, "Peace and Safety!" then SUDDEN DESTRUCTION comes upon them, as labour pains, upon pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. Yes, the great day will come. A day when every eye shall see our LORD Jesus. The Bible says: "Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see him, even they who pierced Him, . . . (Revelation 1:7). Are we ready to face the judgment? God now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising HIM from the dead (Acts 17:30-31).

There is a famous story in the Bible about a man and his family. In Genesis chapter six, we read about Noah. He was a righteous man and walked before God rightly. When people became wicked and did not want to repent, God gave a warning to these people through Noah that a great flood would come and

all those who are walking wickedly would be destroyed by the flood. Noah was asked to build an Ark. Verse 5 says: "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" 11th verse says: The earth also was corrupt, before God, and the earth was filled with violence. Noah gave a warning to the people about the flood but they mocked him and did not repent. The flood came and they were all destroyed. Jesus repeated the story of Noah in Mathew chapter 24, Where He said: "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be: For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. (Verses 36-39). the Bible is very much clear and we have the clear warning that Christ will come one day. If we ignore it and reject it then it would be our mistake. Let us heed to the warning of the Lord. Jesus would come to take his people, his church with him. Would you be one of them? Are you in the Lord's church? Jesus has only one church. He has only one bride. You can be a part of that church which Jesus build. You must believe in HIM and confess him as the Son of God: (Mark 16:16; Acts 8:36; Rom. 10:10), you must repent of your sins (Acts 2:38; 17:30), be baptised in the watery grave (Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Pet. 3:21). As you obey these commands, you will be added to that one church which belongs to Jesus (Acts 2:47). Let us be prepared and be ready, because we do not know, when our Lord comes back.

## **Jesus—The Fulfillment Of Prophecy**

**NORMAN FIELDS**

In Luke 24:13-27, we read of two disciples of Christ on their way to Emmaus. Luke tells us this was the first day of the week (24:1, 13) and that it was the same day that the tomb in

which Jesus had been laid following His death was found to be empty (24:3, 13). As they walked they discussed these events. Along the way they encountered what they supposed to be a stranger and discussed these matters with Him. It is obvious from the response Jesus gave to their account that they expressed an amount of doubt in the testimony of the women; that Jesus had risen from the grave and was alive. Notice what they said in verse 21, "we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel." They spoke of their hope in the past tense, "were," indicating that those hopes had died on the cross with Jesus. And even though we cannot hear the manner in which they relayed what the women at the tomb had told them the doubt in their voices must have been evident for Jesus rebukes them for the lack of faith. This rebuke was given because of a lack of faith in "all that the prophets have spoken." These men should have had no confusion in these matters for the prophets of old had given them great detail concerning these matters. And so "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Lk. 24:27).

What a remarkable statement! Jesus was able to show them from writings thousand of years old that the events of His life, death and resurrection were the fulfillment of prophecy. Indeed there is no greater proof, no greater hard evidence, to the inspiration of the scriptures and the identity of Jesus Christ than the precise fulfillment of ancient prophecy; not just a few vague references with broad interpretations but multitudes given in great detail. Jesus began with Moses and the Prophets (from Genesis to Malachi) in setting these doubtful disciples back on track.

Matthew knew the power of predictive prophecy in proving Jesus to be the Christ. When Matthew wrote his account of Jesus' life and work his aim was to show the Jews that Jesus was indeed the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy concerning the Messiah (Christ). At least nine times Matthew makes the statement, "that it might be fulfilled." Showing that Jesus fulfilled prophecies concerning: the virgin birth of the Christ (Mtt. 1:22; Is. 7:14); His call out of Egypt (Mtt. 2:15; Hos. 11:1); where He would do His work (Mtt. 4:14; Is. 9:1-2); His healing of the sick (Mtt. 8:17; Is. 53:4); and His teaching in parables (Mtt. 13:35;

Ps. 78:2), just to name a few. The Jews had no excuse for not seeing Jesus for who and what He was. Just as the two disciples on the road to Emmaus had no excuse for their doubt.

Let us look at just one of the many prophecies concerning the Christ. In Psalm 22 we have an example of a very detailed prophecy fulfilled exactly in Jesus. The 22<sup>nd</sup> Psalm was written by King David, who ruled Israel from 1011-971 B.C., about one thousand years before Christ was born. Yet in this Psalm David, looking down through the scope of time, records in great detail the events surrounding the crucifixion of Jesus. Notice the following details:

1. David quotes the words of Jesus on the cross a millennium before He said them (Ps. 22:1; Mtt. 27:46).
2. David describes the conduct of the onlookers at the cross hundreds of years before their great grandparents were even born (Ps. 22:7; Mtt. 27:39).
3. Not only their conduct but the very *words* they would speak (Ps. 22:7; Mtt. 27:43).
4. David knew the manner in which the Romans would pierce the hands and feet of Jesus (Ps. 22:16; Mtt. 27:35).
5. He even knew how they would handle the garments belonging to Jesus (Ps. 22:18; Mtt. 27:35).

Now some, in order to discount such rock solid proof, may say, "Jesus was only doing what he had to do in order to fulfill what He knew the Old Testament said of the Messiah." Of course you can immediately see the problem with such thinking. For one, no man hanging on a cross is going to be thinking about what he needs to say and do. All he can know is the tremendous agony of his situation. For another, David does not just tell us what Jesus would do and say but what the people around Him would say and do. The Jews did not want to recognize Jesus as the Christ and yet they did exactly what was prophesied concerning their behavior toward the Christ. The Romans had no idea whatsoever of what the Old Testament prophesied of the Christ. They could have cared less about Jewish prophecies and their fulfillment and yet they did exactly what David said they would do a thousand years before they did it. How could David have possibly known that there would be a Roman army in Jerusalem

and that it would be their custom to cast lots for the clothing of those they executed? How could he have possibly known that Jesus would be mocked and ridiculed by his own people? How could he, or any of the prophets, have known any of the details they recorded concerning the Christ. The answer is found in 2 Peter 1:21. Not a single one of them spoke from their own knowledge, or their "own will," but they were—every one, moved, or guided, in their writings by the Holy Spirit.

Dear reader, how can such evidence be denied? How can one look into the face of fulfilled prophecy and deny what it declares? Jesus used prophecy to prove who He was (Lk. 24:27). The apostles used prophecy to prove who Jesus was (Acts 2:14ff). The New Testaments writers used prophecy to prove who Jesus was (Mtt. 1:22; 2:15; 2:23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4, 27:35). And we can use the more than one hundred detailed prophecies of Jesus Christ to prove that He is who He claimed to be, the Son of God (Jn. 8:24).

## ***Seeing Possessions As They Really Are***

**GLENN COLLEY**

Do we measure a man's worth by his wealth? Do we, in our inter-action with others from day to day show more attention to a rich man than to a poor one? If so, we sin (James 2:1-5, 9). Sadly, some will trade friends, loved ones, and even God for more money. Money has a blinding effect sometimes. There is a great temptation to spend our total energies trying to get more of it. To some it becomes a god.

David's prayer in I Chron. 29:11-17 is good medicine for us when we get a bit out of balance in our view of money.

1 Chronicles 29:11-17 "Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come of thee, and thou reignest over all. And in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make



great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding. O LORD our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thine holy name cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own. I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee."

Now, draw some lessons.

Everything belongs to God. "All that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine. . .(vs. 11)."

This is how I must see God in relation to all things—material and non-material. To God David ascribes ownership of greatness, power, glory, and all that is in the earth. Psalm 24:1 says, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."

Whatever you possess comes from God. Mentally pile all your earthly possessions into one big heap and declare that this is God's and you possess it because of Him. "Both riches and honor come of thee . . . and in thine hand it is to make great . . . and to give strength unto all . . . all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee, (I Chronicles 29:12-14)." How sad for people to be given all they have from God, and then arrogantly claim the credit for themselves without truly acknowledging Jehovah! Some might object, "I work hard. I have what I have because I stick to my job and do it well!" Yes, hard work is necessary, but who gave you the mind and ability to do that job? Deuteronomy 8:18 says, "It is he that giveth thee power to get wealth." No matter what you have gained, you cannot claim ownership independent from God.

There is a right way to look at material wealth. In verse fifteen of David's prayer he said, "For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding." There is

nothing wrong with having these material blessings. The questions swirl around how we will view them and use them. Through Paul the Holy Spirit wrote, "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." James 5:1 says to some who were rich and had a wrong view of their wealth, "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you."

The passion for wealth is based on weak appeals and values. Why? Because we don't really own that wealth. Solomon said, "I shall leave it unto the man that shall be after me." (Ecc. 2:18). Tomorrow, someone else will enjoy the same blessings which you claim to own today. Furthermore, we cannot possess that wealth for very long because of the brevity of life.

In view of this impressive prayer from David we are moved to ask ourselves to ask these questions: "Do I put my material interests ahead of my God?" and "Do I give of means to the church in a manner to please God?" I Chronicles 29:17 says, "I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee."

For today, let us work to re-adjust our view of the wealth God has given.

"Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation." (Psalm 68:19).

## *Atheism Exposed*

MEL FUTRELL

Atheism is simply the doctrine or belief that there is no GOD. And it is the opinion of this writer that it is the most anti-religious and anti-intelligent notion to ever spring from the mind of man. But for those of us that believe the Bible is GOD-breathed, the statement of David in Psalm 14:1 represents the final word:

"The fool hath said in his heart; there is no GOD."

Friends, either GOD exists or he doesn't. There is no middle ground. And it boils down to who or what do you believe.

Our brethren have been debating atheists for years. Alexander Campbell took on the infamous skeptic Robert Owen in 1829. W.L. Oliphant exposed the founder and first President of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism, Charles Smith, in 1929. James D. Bales out-smarted Woolsey Teller in 1947. More recently Thomas Warren repelled the threats of A.G.N. Flew and Wallace Matson; while Wayne Jackson polished off Tom Carroll these and several other brethren have taken bold steps to beat back the threat Atheism poses to our society.

In the Oliphant-Smith debate of 1929, atheists Charles Smith argued "the five fundamentals of atheism:" Materialism, Empiricism, Evolution, Hedonism, and the Existence of Evil. These items remain, to one degree or another, constants in the debate over the existence of GOD up to the present hour. But one argument of the atheist has perhaps plagued mankind more than any other. That is, the existence of evil and human suffering. The argument is an old one. Some 2200 years ago the Greek atheistic philosopher Epicurus said:

"Either GOD wishes to destroy evil and cannot; or he can but will not; or neither wishes nor has the power; or he both desires and is able. If he wishes and cannot, he is impotent; if he can but will not, he is wicked; if he neither wishes nor can, he is impotent as well as wicked; if he can and will, why does evil exist?" [As quoted in, Oliphant-Smith Debate, F.L. Rowe Publisher, 1929, p. 28].

Back in 1929 Charles Smith said of the above quotation, "Epicurus bottled up GOD with logic forever in these words." and "For two thousand years the priests have been unable to refute the Greek atheist." But brethren, is that really true? Is there no answer to this atheistic quibble? Even though many atheists today consider the moral argument of Epicurus persuasive, it has been and will continue to be refuted. Let me suggest four brief responses.

First, no one denies that there is evil in this world; but is GOD to be blame for it? Evil exists because man ( a creature of free will) chose to disregard the will of GOD. Man is responsible

for the entrance of sin into this world (Romans 5:12). And because of his personal wrong choices he sometimes suffers (1 Peter 4:15). True GOD could have created man as a machine with no control over his own actions (would they then even be his actions?) but this would not be good for man and GOD knew that. Thus man was created in the image of GOD (Genesis 1:26-27) and given the ability to choose.

Second, if it is admitted by the atheist that evil exists in this world; does he not then imply by that admission, as Professor Norman Geisler suggests, "an ultimate standard of justice?" [The Intellectuals Speak Out About GOD, 1984, pp. 133-134]. I believe so! And if he denies this he has either contradicted himself or abandoned reason. As brother Wayne Jackson has noted, "If there is no GOD, hence no universal system of 'rightness', how could there be any such thing as 'evil'?" Essays in Apologetics, Vol. 1, 1984, pp. 98-104.

Third, a clear weakness of Epicurus' argument is that it assumes there is no benefit to or purpose for suffering and evil. Please consider the following benefits.

- (1) It develops patience [James 1:2-3]
- (2) It reminds us we are strangers in this world [Hebrews 11:13; 1 Peter 2:11]
- (3) GOD allowed his own Son to suffer [Hebrews 5:8; 1 Peter 2:21] and he is our example.

Fourth, the Epicurean argument is usually taken and used by atheists in this syllogistic form:

- (1) If GOD is all good he would defeat evil.
- (2) If GOD is all powerful He could defeat evil.
- (3) But evil is not defeated
- (4) Therefore, no such GOD exists.

But again a false assumption is present in this argument. Premise 3 makes no allowance for time. Professor Norman Geisler has said, "Once the time factor is placed in the premise the conclusion no longer follows. For simply because GOD has not yet defeated evil does not mean that He never will defeat evil in the future." [The Intellectuals Speak Out About GOD, 1984, chp. 9, p. 131]. And isn't this what we all believe brethren, that there will be a day of reckoning. [Mt. 25:46; Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor.

5:10; Rev. 20:12, etc.]

Brethren, Atheism offers nothing constructive. It is altogether destructive. How has Atheism helped our homes, schools, or society in general? It has done nothing but tear apart the very fabric which holds us together. What do you have to believe to be an atheist? Nothing. What do you have to do to be an atheist? Nothing. Atheism offers no GOD as our creator. Therefore, every atheist is an evolutionist. Atheism offers no Savior of the world, and thus, no salvation from our sins. Atheism offers no inspired Word, the Bible, to govern and guide us. And thus finds itself in the position of denying the absolute.

Only fools deny the existence of GOD (Psalm 14:1)! This is what the Bible says. What do you say?

## ***Learn To Discern***

**ALLEN WEBSTER**

If sin were an animal, it would be a snake. If it were a sickness, it would be cancer. If it were a chemical, it would be poison. In medical terms, it is a disease. In geographic terms, it is quicksand. In weather words, it is a hurricane. To the hunted, it is a trap; to the treasure-seeker, it is "fool's gold;" to the wagon train, it is an ambush; to life, it is death.

As bad as sin is, most people are not afraid of it. They have learned to look at it through lens that deform its true character. Let us examine some of these.

Dark Sunshades — "I can hardly see it at all." Ahab committed sin "as if it had been a light thing for him" (I Kings 16:31). Those who condemned Jesus said, "Let his blood be on us and our children" (Matthew 27:25). Some of the leading "thinkers" of our day are denying the reality of sin. What used to be black is gray, and gray is white. As in Jeremiah's day, the "blushing mechanism" of some has malfunctioned (Jeremiah 8:12) — nothing is sinful to them.

The spiritual senses of these have been dulled to the point that they cannot see, hear or feel with the inner faculties. Jesus

looked into the hearts of those wearing sunshades and earplugs and said, "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart . . ." (Matthew 15:13).

**ROSE-COLORED GLASSES.** How many times have we approached one about some sin only to hear, "I don't see anything wrong with it." The Scriptures are read, but only to hear, "Well, I don't see it that way." And, they don't. Prejudice glasses are keeping them from seeing the truth. But God's word has not changed, and will not, so they must take off the shades.

The Bible says, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20). "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord" (Proverbs 17:15).

Sin is today spoken of as negative goodness, immature development, misdirection, a defect of temper, a mere mistake. Lust is called love, hard-core pornography is art, lying is coloring the truth, dishonesty is "good business," car theft is joy-riding, homosexuality is an alternate lifestyle, gambling is revenue enhancement, drunkenness is alcoholism, baby-killing is abortion and adultery is "spicing up a marriage."

Modesty is old fashioned quaintness, chastity is neurotic inhibition, standing faith is termed "standing in the way of progress," living in sin is a trial marriage and prayer is psychological feedback (Winkler).

**TELESCOPE.** A telescope is good for seeing objects a great way off, but is useless for anything close by. This is the person who knows all about every sin committed by another's family, but cannot seem to see anything wrong in his own. Paul wrote, "I charge thee . . . that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality" (I Timothy 5:21).

God held Eli responsible for his family behavior: "For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and *he restrained them not*" (I Samuel 3:13; cf. 2:12). Although he confronted them with the error (2:22-25), it was too little, too late.

Some today quickly condemn an action in someone they know, but when one of their own is guilty of it, the telescope does not allow them to focus on it. For instance, before a son or daughter became involved in an adulterous relationship, they were strongly opposed to divorce and remarriage for just any cause (as they should have been, Matthew 19:9), but changed when it entered the family. Sometimes one family will condemn another who misses services (Hebrews 10:25), while they dress immodestly (I Timothy 2:9). One might castigate another for dancing (Galatians 5:19-21), when he/she gossips (Leviticus 19:16). One will condemn a drunk (Ephesians 6:18), who lies or curses (Ephesians 5:25, 29). Let's wear the jewel of consistency.

**Bifocals**—"Your sin looks big, mine is small." Some people cannot seem to focus on the beam closeup, but they can clearly see the mote far off (Matthew 7:3-5). Self-criticism is much more difficult for most than "other fellow" criticism. This is hypocrisy, the Pharisee's trade, "For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers" (Matthew 23:4).

Paul spoke of the danger of young widows being supported by the church. "And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but *tattlers also and busybodies*, speaking things which they ought not" (I Timothy 5:13; cf. II Thessalonians 3:11). Christians will suffer, but they should never suffer for being "a busybody in other men's matters" (I Peter 4:15).

The Bible teaches us to not ignore sin. We are to help our brother "out of the ditch" (Galatians 6:1, 2; James 5:20), for we really are "our brother's keeper" (cf. Genesis 4:9). At the same time, we must be careful to first clean out our own closets, for blind men do not make good guides (Matthew 15:14).

**Magnifying Glass**—"I cannot forget my sins." Some Christians keep their forgiven sins under a magnifying glass, never out of the conscience's eye. If one has done what God said to do to have sins removed (cf. Acts 22:16; I John 1:7-9), then God has forgotten them (Hebrews 8:12). Christians need good "forgetters" (Philippians 3:13).

Let us all learn to discern about sin.

# *Disregard For Truth*

JOHNNY RAMSEY

Paul warned the Thessalonians that men would depart from the faith and that such apostasy was "already at work" in his day (II Thessalonians 2:7). When error comes it is not in one gigantic leap but in short steps that eventuate on the sordid streets of hell. The impact of the influence of such action overwhelms a lot of folk who go with the tide rather than choosing the challenging nature of Christianity. When the floodgates of apostasy open wide great masses of spineless people are swept away. Such sorrow reminds me of the famous words of Cicero in the first century:

"He departed, withdrew, rushed off and broke away."

It is very difficult to ever gain back those who unwisely and swiftly departed from Truth. When men fail to "prove all things and hold fast to that which is good" (I Thessalonians 5:21) it becomes axiomatic that someday soon they will no longer be among the saints. Those who never check the Scriptures to document the way of salvation are already in the trap of Satan (Acts 17:11). It is significant that the warning Paul gave the Ephesian elders concerning apostasy was quickly followed by a commendation of the sacred text as their only hope of saving the church (Acts 20:32). When brethren no longer care what the Bible says, but are rather enthralled by public opinion and poise, they remind me of the man Catullus spoke of fifty years before Christ:

"Now he is treading that dark road to the place from which they say no one has ever returned."

A failure to stand up for the Lord (Ephesians 6:10-12) is tantamount to admitting the world is too much with us. When members of the church defect and abandon Christ for earthly fame they are benefit of solid foundation secret moorings and future hope. Though it took Israel only one night to leave Egypt it took forty years to get Egypt out of them! When it was too much trouble to worship God properly (I Kings 12:28) and serving Him became tedious (Malachi 1:13) the tie that bound the creature to the Creator was flimsy indeed. One of Fanny Crosby's best



hymns reads like this:

"Savior more than life to me  
I am clinging, clinging close to Thee,  
Every day, every hour  
Let me feel Thy cleansing power  
May Thy tender love to me  
Bind me closer, closer Lord to Thee."

When we, like Ezra, seek the law of the Lord and do it we will naturally be stronger and more helpful to others who are on the verge of departure from the gospel system. As there were false prophets in days gone by (II Peter 2:1) so shall false teachers abound in our day (I John 4: 1). Such must be opposed by the sword of the Spirit, the blessed and powerful word of God (Ephesians 6:17). Those who would pervert the glad tidings must be exposed and never condoned (Galatians 1:6-9; II John 9-11). Regardless of the consequences "we must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29) and that must be done boldly (Acts 14:3).

Such courageous action will not make us morbid or tentative but rather aggressive with the opportunities the Savior supplies. We will never fall into Satan's trap of pessimism but realistically prepare for battle by more ardent study of Scripture, more fervent prayer and a dedication to duty that realizes the opposition is strong but that our God is far more able than all the henchmen the enemy can muster (I John 4:4; 5:4; 3:8). We dare not compromise, for Truth allows no truce (Matthew 12:30), and there can never be concord between light and darkness (II Corinthians 6:14). Smooth words of dialogue will never replace strong words of purity (Isaiah 30:10; Jeremiah 9:3). We have no proper choice but to say with Joshua:

"But as for me and my house we will serve Jehovah!" Truth will be more precious than life and if death comes because we stood firm in the face of apostasy it will be a glorious and happy departure from this old sinful world (Revelation 14:13).

In the first century, followers of the Lamb of God, were persecuted, imprisoned and slaughtered by enemies of the gospel. Judaism, Gnosticism and Roman oppression combined to challenge Christianity. But, as many historians reflected, so the success of the Redeemer's army confirmed:

"The blood of the martyrs became the seed of the kingdom."

Apostasy again in our era is a shattering reality that demands the best within us if such error is defeated. Whether it be in a compromise in regard to worship, doctrine, morals (such as the marriage — divorce controversy) or authority, we dare not bend the knee to Baal. Too much is at stake — now and in the future and even unto eternity — for us to acquiesce. In the Pulpit, classroom, radio, television, periodicals, homes, streets and personal evangelism we must be true to the inspired and complete Holy Scriptures! In morals and modesty and every phase of personal purity we dare not hurt but rather uphold the cause of our Savior!

T.O. Chrisholm tenderly wrote:

“Bring Christ your broken life

So marred by sin

He will create anew

Make whole again

Your empty, wasted life

He will restore

And your iniquities

Remember no more.”

May we never desert Bible principles or abandon the faith of the gospel but, with definite stamina, press on to higher ground (Philippians 3:14). We should beware of false prophets and remember “We are complete in Christ” (Colossians 2:8-10). Being always prepared to defend truth, (Philippians 1:17), let us rejoice in our relationship with the pristine beauty of Christianity (Romans 5:5). The courage and conviction of godly people, working in unison, under the banner of the Lord, can overwhelm evil and error. May we, therefore, work together in upholding the message of the Cross and in exposing sin wherever it is found.

“Give me some men who are stout-hearted men

Who will fight for the right they adore

Shoulder to shoulder and bolder and bolder

They grow as they go to the fore”

Truly, nothing can stop us or halt any plan when courageous Christians stick together man to man!



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*Printed and Published by Sunny David on behalf of Church of Christ, New Delhi and Printed at : Print India A 38/2, Mayapuri, I, New Delhi-110064. Editor : Sunny David.*

Licence to Post without Prepayment of Postage

No. U/SE/25/2000

Posted at New Delhi PSO on 10/11 February, 2000

Delhi Postal Regn. No. DL-11262/2000

Regd. No. 26921/71

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