

The Berea Baptist Banner

"Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth." Ps. 60:1

The Impenetrable Cloud

By Paul Stepp
of Indore, West Virginia

"We have transgressed and have rebelled: thou hast not pardoned. Thou hast covered with anger, and persecuted us: thou hast slain, thou hast not pitied. Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through. Thou hast made us as the offscouring and refuse in the midst of the people. All our enemies have opened their mouths against us. Fear and a snare is come upon



us, desolation and destruction. Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people.

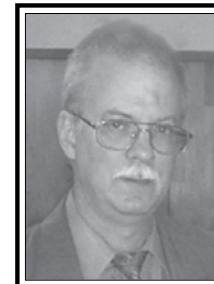
Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission, Till the LORD look down, and behold from heaven. Mine eye affecteth mine heart because of all the daughters of

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The Agony of Our Substitute in Gethsemane

By Lucien J. LeSage Jr.
of Pride, Louisiana

In my endeavor to determine a title for this article it seemed "The Agony of our Substitute in Gethsemane" was the most appropriate in my mind. To truly comprehend what our blessed Savior went through in that garden and why He prayed the way He did, I believe we must understand that He was the substitute for His people.



Before going to that scene there in the garden I would like to take the reader to a different scene long before Gethsemane.

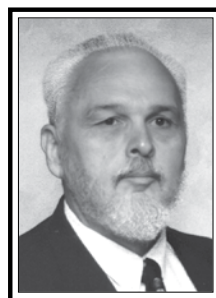
It was where Moses met the Lord in the form of a burning bush. In that scene we saw that it took place on the "backside of the desert"

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The Raising of Lazarus - A Picture of Regeneration

By Curtis Pugh
of Poteau, Oklahoma

John records the miracle of the resurrection of Christ which, incidentally, was witnessed by no man. In addition he records one post-resurrection miracle, the miraculous catch of fishes. Aside from those two, John was moved by the Holy Spirit to write his gospel around seven miracles



performed by the Lord Jesus. He was led by the Holy Spirit to arrange all that he wrote to suit his purpose. The Spirit of God even moved him to use a special word in describing the miracles

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The Church at Philadelphia

By Milburn R. Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it; for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my



word, and hast not denied my name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because

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It takes a long time to say nothing.

He who has really nothing to say will speak on and on as if he were wound up like a clock, and must keep on till he had run down.

"Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few" (Ecclesiastes 5:2).

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The purpose of the Berea Baptist Banner is as follows:

1. To honor God and to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. To preach the gospel to lost sinners.
3. To spread the whole counsel of God's Word.
4. To encourage God's preachers and to strength-en His churches in the most holy faith.
5. To motivate God's children to a closer fellow-ship around His Word.
6. To inform people of world events in light of Bible prophecy.
7. To condemn and expose error wherever it may rear its ugly head.
8. To stimulate Christian growth in grace.
9. To make the Devil and his demons as mad as possible.

Impenetrable

(Continued from page 1) ♦

my city. Mine enemies chased me sore, like a bird, without cause. They have cut off my life in the dungeon, and cast a stone upon me. Waters flowed over mine head; then I said, I am cut off" (Lam. 3:42-54).

The title for my sermon is "The Impenetrable Cloud." I gather the title from v. 44 of the text, which says, "Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through" (Lam. 3:44). I want to consider this thought – that God has covered Himself with a cloud, and that our prayers may not pass through at such a time. In other words, it appears that there is an Impenetrable Cloud that covers the Throne of God from time to time, and from person to person and from place to place. Now, we know that God is omniscient – He sees and knows all things. We know that He is omnipresent – He is everywhere at once and at all times. And yet, if this is true, how can passages of Scripture, such as we have read, teach us that God is surrounded by something impenetrable, through which the pleas and the cries and the prayers of men cannot pass?

It must be that the "cloud" mentioned in our text passage is an allegory, teaching us that there is an obstacle that exists between God and man, which sometimes will prevent the prayers, the words, or the pleas of men from gaining the proper or expected access into God's very presence. Certainly, there are times when God will (so to speak) turn a deaf ear to the words and desires of men. This does not limit God's sovereignty; nor does this alter any of His character or person in any way. This is simply a way for God to

make known unto us the fact that His holiness and His justice are, at times, offended by every man, and they will not have access into His presence.

I think it would be good for us to be reminded of the ways in which God's judgment and justice are evident in His dealings with men. I want you to be reminded of the fact that the Lord does not hear and answer the prayers of the wicked – those unsaved who have rejected Him; the Lord is not inclined to bless the people, nation, or society that will reject Him – though they may call out to Him in some inconsistent or insincere manner; and, the Lord will not hear the prayers of God's people – at least not in a positive fashion – if we are prone to ignore Him or place idols and sin between us and our God.

I see this "Impenetrable Cloud" as a sort of "brass heaven" (such as is referred to in Deuteronomy 28:23), or "iron heaven" (such as is referred to in Leviticus 26:19). This brass or iron heaven covers the whole earth – separating man from God's throne – only penetrated here and there where some faithful saint, some penitent sinner, or some godly Church will offer up prayers unto God. But, for the rest, their so-called prayers, their cries, pleas, and self-satisfying attempts at praise unto God, are only insincere and fruitless attempts to penetrate the iron heaven that separates wicked men from the Holy Throne of the God Who made them.

THE LORD DOES NOT HEAR THE PRAYERS OF THE WICKED

First, let us be reminded of the fact that God does not bend His ear to the call, or the cry, or the prayer of the wicked and reprobate man or woman. He is not

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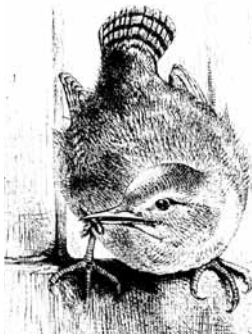
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Impenetrable

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bound to such folk, nor do they have any claim on His mercy or grace. His holiness will not allow sin and wickedness into His presence. We read in the Proverbs of Solomon, **“The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous”** (Pro. 15:29). Again, we know that God is Omnipresent, and there is nowhere that He is not always present. And yet, this Scripture teaches us that, at least in a personal and helpful way, God is **“far from the wicked.”** He does not know them in a loving way, nor is there any covenant that binds them to Him or His goodness.

If we further examine this barrier that exists between mortal men and our Holy God, I suppose that we might say that the ingredients which make up the barrier – this “Impenetrable Cloud” – are the justice and the holiness of God Almighty. As mere mortal men, how can we gain for ourselves access into Heaven? As depraved and fallen sinners, how can we hope to approach a holy and just God? God will not simply overlook or ignore, either the sin or the sinner. Unless His justice is satisfied, no man will be able to come into His presence.

The blind man who was healed by Jesus Christ, told the leaders of the Jews, **“Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth”** (John 9:31). This is a great truth! This is something that gained scorn for the blind man; and, if we teach this same fact, we, too, will be scorned by the world at large, and we will even be chastised by the religious world and Christianity itself! Men like to think that they can always – at

least as a last resort – call upon God, and expect Him to hear them. And yet, God is not obligated to hear sinners, nor is He inclined to look upon fallen men with favor and goodness. Sinners cannot pray unto God upon occasion, and have any hope of the blessings of God. Their wishes (for the prayers of those who are not bound to Him through the covenant of election are nothing more than this) may be fulfilled from time to time, and their desires may be granted for a while. But, this has nothing to do with God’s pleasure on their behalf, and everything to do with the fulfillment of His overall purpose and the advancement of His everlasting and all-prevailing will in the course of human affairs.

We must remind ourselves and others, that God’s justice will not allow sin to go unpunished. Nor will God’s holiness allow unpardoned sinners into His pleasant thoughts. **“He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination”** (Pro. 28:9). In fact, we can go so far as to say this: not only does God not hear the prayers of the sinners and the rebels; but, their prayers are even an offense unto Him, and an **“abomination.”**

Unpardoned sinners have no access to God’s throne of mercy and grace. Mercy and grace are reserved for the elect – the sheep, or the children of God. **“The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them. The LORD preserveth all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy”** (Ps. 145:18-20). There must be **“truth”** and **“love”** in the relationship that exists between a man and God, before that there

will be any successful prayers.

I do not want these words or these Scriptures that we are studying to be a discouragement to any sinner who is ordained unto salvation. We do not want to discourage the penitent sinner from calling out unto God, confessing their sins, and pleading for God’s mercy and grace. If there is a broken heart and a contrite spirit, you can be sure that God will hear the prayer and the cry of such a person! **“The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit”** (Ps. 34:18). The attitude and the repentance of such a man or woman is evidence of the workings of God, and this person’s prayers will be heard, and his godly sorrow will accomplish repentance and salvation. There is hope for the sinner, only as the Holy Spirit leads him to repentance and gives him faith to cry out to the Lord for forgiveness and salvation. Such prayers are not only heard by God, they resound throughout Heaven, and inspire rejoicing amongst the angels!

THE LORD DOES NOT BLESS THE WAYS OF THE WICKED NATION

An “Impenetrable Cloud” separates the wicked nation from the blessings and the favour of God. **“Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination**

unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood” (Isa. 1:10-15). We live in a nation, wherein are persons whose hands are full of the blood of aborted babies. We live in a nation wherein are persons who have set aside right, and who have advanced themselves and their various agendas at the cost of the morality and the righteousness of an entire people. We live in a nation where God is opposed, the Name of Christ is denied, and yet certain people still dare to portray this to be a nation which has a claim upon the blessings and favor of God. There are leaders in our society and our government which will still, occasionally (when the event or the occasion will serve to further their own wicked agenda), deign to call upon the name of some god (not the One True God – for they have forsaken Him); and they will ask others to call upon a god; and they will put forth a pretense of worship and a pretense of humility and display a pretense of religion – all to accomplish some wicked end of their own.

Do you think God will hear such a nation or such persons? God will not bless or endow with His favor, such a place, or society, or people, or nation, who will only demonstrate an occasional regard for Him, and who have no consistent desire to obey Him and His Word. **“Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched**

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Impenetrable

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out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices” (Prov. 1:24-31).

“**Then shall they cry unto the LORD, but he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings**” (Micah 3:4). If some may try to deny the blood-guilt of our nation, they must at least admit that our nation and our people “**have behaved themselves ill in their doings.**” God will “**hide his face from**” the people who work evil. It is dangerous and sad to note that our nation today, is such a nation – bereft of the blessings and favor of God. Whatever good is directed towards us, is not based on our own efforts, or goodness, or obedience; nor are these blessings meant for our good or benefit; rather, it may be that God is only for a while preserving us from the conquerors and the defilers until He is finished with us on the world stage.

We are guilty, as a nation. We may cry out, but it is not a cry of true repentance, but rather a cry born of a fear of destruction,

when calamity is upon us. Here are some thoughts expressed by John Trapp in his commentary on Micah 3:4. “He will even cast out their prayers with contempt, as being the prayers of the flesh for ease, and not of the spirit for grace. They cry unto the Lord aloud, but it is only to be rid of his rod; they roar when upon the rack, but it is only to get off; they look ruefully, as the fox doth when taken in a gin, but it is only to be set at liberty; they chatter out a charm when God’s chastening is upon them, yea, they may be with child (as it were) of a prayer, and yet bring forth nothing but wind, Isaiah 26:16-18. For either God answereth them not at all, which was Saul’s case and curse, I Samuel 28:15, and Moab’s, Isaiah 16:12, and David’s enemies’, Psalms 18:41; or else he give them bitter answers, Ezekiel 14:4 Judges 10:13-14. Or if better; it is but for a further mischief, that he may curse their blessings, and consume them after that he had done them good, Joshua 24:20. Their preservation from one evil is but a reservation to seven worse; as we see in Pharaoh, Sennacherib, Ahab, and others.”

Man, on his own, and found in his own wicked condition, cannot penetrate that cloud of justice and judgment which does cover the throne of God’s mercy and compassion. Though God may do good or allow good to be done unto a nation, so far as that nation is to be used as a part of the purpose and will of God, His true blessings and favors cannot and will not be bestowed upon a people who reject Him and deny the truths and commandments of His Word.

**THE LORD IS NOT PLEASED
WITH SIN AND WICKEDNESS
IN HIS PEOPLE**

Finally, I want to make this ser-

mon more personal to you and me – the ones of us who are gathered together in the Name of Jesus Christ, and who have heard the blessed call of the Holy Spirit, and who have been made to know the sweetness of the Grace of God, and the wonders of the pardon and forgiveness of God. I want each of us to be reminded of the fact that there may, from time to time, be a cloud that will cover God and His Throne – even from our perspective. In other words, there are times in the lives of the saved on earth, when the Lord may not seem accessible to us, and times when our own sins will put an obstacle between us and our God. John Newton wrote,

“Here often from our eyes

Clouds hide the light divine;

There we shall have unclouded skies,

Our Sun will always shine.”

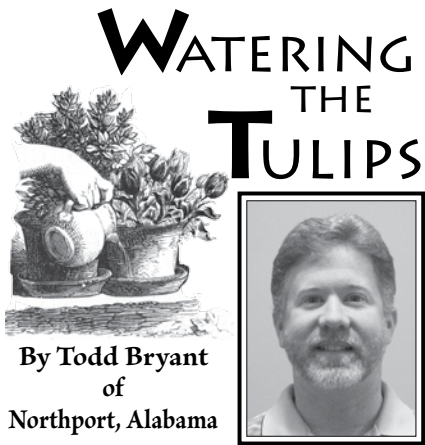
The light from Heaven is not always bright for us, while we walk the face of this earth. Though Jesus Christ is unchanging, and though His light and grace is always there, we, as sinners saved by grace, do not always behold the light, nor are we always in the proper frame of mind and spirit as we seek the favors and blessings of God. “**Then came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me. And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them? Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the mul-**

titude of his idols; That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols” (Ezek. 14:1-5). Some may argue that the “**elders of Israel**” mentioned in this passage are comprised of only the unsaved and the wicked, therefore they could not hope to have access to God in any positive fashion. However, I tend to believe that there was always a remnant amongst Israel who were meant to be saved. And, I further believe that these who were the children of God were often led astray by the wicked leaders and the rulers of the Jews and Israelites. Therefore, it is fair to point out that even the righteous – those meant for salvation – will sometimes have their access unto God diminished or even completely obstructed for a time.

King David was a man who experienced many highs and lows in his life of service unto God. He, too, acknowledged the fact that God was not always there to hear his cries: “**If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me**” (Ps. 66:18). The taint of sin (as opposed to the “**holy hands**” mentioned in I Timothy 2:8) will obstruct the prayers of God’s people. If we “**regard iniquity**” in our hearts; if we become “**estranged from**” God through our idols; how can we expect the heavens to open up to allow our prayers to pass through?

The fact that God will turn away, for a while, from His people who have scorned Him, can be applied on both a personal and a societal level. The truth is, that we, many times in our lives, may cast up sins and rebellions between ourselves and God. These sins and rebellions will result in a seemingly “**Impenetrable Cloud**” which will separate us from our God and

♦ (Continued on page 5)



By Todd Bryant
of
Northport, Alabama

The Effects of Pride

“Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Pro. 16:18).

Most of us are familiar with the verse before us today. Yet, pride seems to be an issue almost everywhere we turn – even in Christendom. Grace should teach us just the opposite of pride. Understand, grace can simply be defined as “getting what you do not deserve”. Knowing that, what do we have to be prideful about? Paul reminded those arrogant Christians at Corinth of the same thing when he said, **“For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it”** (I Cor. 4:7)? As children of God, we do not glory in ourselves. Our boast must always be in Christ.

So, why do we see such prideful attitudes even among those that understand that grace is a free gift of a Sovereign God? Simply, we have done quite the poor job of applying the knowledge that God has given. When we glory, we are to glory in the Lord (I Cor. 1:31). We, as believers, are not working to earn our salvation. We serve the Lord out of a gracious heart because He has saved us from our sins. It is our

honor and privilege to serve God Who saved our soul through the sacrifice of His perfect Son.

The Bible is certainly full of examples of pride. In these examples, our text verse continues to ring true. Certainly, Satan was originally a beautiful cherub. He was created as such by God. He was unfallen in the Garden of Eden until he fell through pride (Ezek. 28:11-19). Certainly, because of his pride, he will ultimately be destroyed.

Jesus taught a parable of a rich man that took much pride in the work of his hands. The man looked at all he had done without considering it was the blessing of God. While looking over the abundance that God had given him, he concluded that he had made it all happen. He intended to tear down the barns on his farm and build bigger barns to hold all of the produce he thought he had produced. **“But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided”** (Luke 12:20)? Certainly, the main application of this parable is covetousness, which is the younger brother of pride. However, we certainly can see the pride in the rich man’s heart just before judgment is pronounced.

Child of God, let us see the effects of pride in the Bible and flee from it. May we always see that pride brings destruction. Take note, even the truths of God’s Word can be held up in a prideful manner and this is unacceptable. In His first advent, Jesus came as a Servant. This is our Example today. Certainly, we see this pattern followed by the apostles and early churches. If we are to be faithful Christians, we must eject all pride from our

attitudes and glory in Christ’s work of reconciliation alone!



Impenetrable

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from the satisfying comforts and pleasures that prayer will grant unto us.

For a while, it may be that the rebellious child of God will have to cope and deal with many difficulties in this life, because the Lord God, as an “Impenetrable Cloud,” will refuse to answer our prayers, and will refrain from rescue and blessings in our lives. And yet, if we will return unto Him, He will bless us. **“Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer”** (Ps. 4:1). **“Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee. Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel”** (Isa. 44:21-23).

Samuel Medley wrote,

*“Though the corruptions of thy heart
Daily new cause of grief impart,
Pray that thy lusts may all be slain,
Nor shalt thou seek his face in vain.*

*Though sharp afflictions still abound,
And clouds and darkness thee surround,
Still pray, for God will all explain,
Nor shalt thou seek his face in vain.*

In him, and him alone, confide;

*Still at the throne of grace abide;
Eternal victory thou shalt gain,*

Nor shalt thou seek his face in vain.”

Samuel Medley’s words remind us of the promise that God will be there for those of us who are the people of God, if only we will call upon Him in a genuine and sincere fashion. When we need Him, He will always be there for us. In fact, He is always there – He is always our God – though we may forget or forsake Him for a while, He will always bring us back unto Him.



Church at Philadelphia

(Continued from page 1) ◊

thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” (Rev. 3:7-13).

The church at Philadelphia was the opposite of the church at Sardis. The Lord Jesus had no commendation for the Sardis Church, and nothing but commendation for the Philadelphia Church. The church in this lesson was a strong and sound church in the first century. It might be considered an “ideal

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Church at Philadelphia

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church,” or a church “highly favored” by Christ. Others would call it “the church of brotherly love,” seeing this is the meaning of the word “Philadelphia.”

THE CHURCH (v. 7)

The time of the founding of this church is as unknown as is its founder. Most likely the church at Philadelphia was the fruit of the missionary labors of Paul or some of his co-workers. All we can be certain of is the existence of a sound church there in A.D. 96 when Christ sent this epistle to them.

History records that the Philadelphia Church out lasted the other six. The historian Gibbon speaks of “Philadelphia alone” surviving “by prophecy or by courage.” Christians are still found in this old city today who belong to the Greek Church. I am told there is a bishop of Philadelphia as well as several churches.

THE CITY (v. 7)

The city of Philadelphia was located 15 miles from Smyrna and 28 miles southeast of Sardis. It was situated in the plain of Hermus about midway between the river of that name and the termination of Mount Tmolus. The city was on a hill surrounded with four flat summits. The country, as viewed from this hill, was magnificent--gardens and vineyards were at the back and sides of the town and before it one of the most beautiful and extensive plains of Asia.

The city of Philadelphia was founded in 140 B.C. by the king of Pergamos, Attalus Philadelphus II, from whom it received its name. In 133 B.C. The city passed into the hands of the Romans. It continued a center of Christianity longer than all the other towns of

Asia Minor. It was finally overrun by the Turks in A.D. 1392 by the conqueror Bajazat. Today it still exists as a Turkish town under the name of “Allah Shehev,” which means “the city of God.” This is a significant fact when you recall the promise made to the church. **“I will write upon him. . .the name of the city of my God.”**

Philadelphia was well located where three great countries joined together. The lands of Mysia and Lydia and Phrygia all bordered at Philadelphia in the apostolic age. It was “an open door” for trade on the main road from Smyrna to the cities of Phrygia. The city was “a key” to the trade of extensive regions. Attalus established the city to spread the Greek language and culture to the wild tribes of interior Phrygia.

The city of Philadelphia was located on a flat summit of a volcanic mountain range. Consequently, the inhabitants were often subjected to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. After one of its severest earthquakes in A.D. 17, the Roman emperor, Tiberius Cersar, rebuilt it like he did Sardis. In gratitude for this kindness, Philadelphia renamed their city “New Ceasarea,” the new city of Ceasar. The character of the emperor so deteriorated that the people soon regretted the change.

THE CHRIST (v. 7)

The description of Christ in each of these letters is adapted to the condition of the church. The Speaker addresses Himself to them thusly: **“These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.”**

First, Jesus Christ is called “holy.” This means that His personal character is essentially

“holy.” This epistle belongs appropriately to God, Who alone is holy (Rev. 15:4). In this term we behold essential Deity being attributed to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is that Holy Thing born of a virgin (Luke 1:35), and the Bible often ascribed holiness to Him (Acts 2:27; 3:14). Even in His human nature He is perfectly exempt from the least moral taint, being **“holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners”** (Heb. 7:26).

Second, the attribute of truth is applied to the Savior. This epithet, like the preceding, is applicable only to the Father, Who only is true (John 17:3). Here truth is applied to Christ since He is the expressed image of the Father (Heb. 1:3). The perfection of truth is applied to Christ in the New Testament (John 1:9, 14, 17; 8:40, 45; 14:6; 18:37; I John 5:20). In the Bible Christ is called the “true” Bread, the “true” Vine, the “true” Light, etc.

Third, Christ is said to have **“the key of the house of David.”** This expression is taken from Isaiah 22:22. Evidently, what was said of Eliakim in the reign of King Hezekiah is true of Jesus Christ. Eliakim, a type if Christ, had all the affairs of the kingdom put under his management. Even so, all authority and power is vested in the hands of Jesus Christ. He has power over all flesh and all authority on earth and in Heaven. He opens the kingdom of Heaven to all who believe His gospel; He bars the door of admission against all who would climb up some other way.

Since it is distinctly said He has **“the key of David,”** we must also see in this that Christ has the crown rights to the throne of David. This authority He will assume when the seventh trumpet shall sound (Rev. 11:15-17).

Although He shall not actually sit upon the throne of His glory until He comes in His glory (Matt. 25:31). When Christ returns to the earth He **“will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down”** (Acts 15:16).

Christ possesses the highest administrative powers over His kingdom and His churches. He does not share this right with some earthly church clergy. Peter did open up the kingdom of Heaven to the Gentiles by using the keys Christ gave him, but Peter left the door open. If any church on earth errs in binding and loosing, Christ overrides their error in human judgment. He can veto their decision. No church or individual can open what Christ shuts, nor shut what He opens.

THE COMMENDATION (v. 8)

The commendation is given in verse 8: **“I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it; for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.”**

Philadelphia was the church of “the open door.” This door was not Christ as some have supposed, seeing He is said to open the door. This was the door of opportunity and service, a field of usefulness. It was not a door of escape. Rather, it was an entrance to a larger life and a great work for Christ. The great Head of the church would have these people to become a missionary base for the spread of the gospel.

The church did not need to pray for Christ to open for them some doors of service. These doors were already open. It was the business of the church at Philadelphia to enter the door Christ had already opened. Let us not pray for God to open some doors of service for us. Instead, let us pray for God

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to open our eyes to the doors which are already standing wide open. Let us go in haste through these doors, for some doors are beginning to close largely due to our own inactivity.

“Thou hast a little strength.”

The language used seems to suggest this church was feeble in spiritual life and maybe small in number. Feebleness is no barrier in Christ's work. All too many times strength is a barrier. Isaiah 40:29 declares: **“He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.”** Christ told the Apostle Paul: **“My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness”** (II Cor. 12:9).

“Thou. . . hast kept my word.”

The reality of Christian strength is manifested by Christian fidelity. The Philadelphia Church had not repudiated the Word of God. They had not gone after modernism. Any church which loves Christ obeys and protects His written Word. Jesus Christ said: **“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. . . . If a man love me, he will keep my words”** (John 14:21,23). God grant that our modern churches be like the Philadelphia Church. How important that we today obey and protect the Word, especially in a time when so many are mutilating the Bible and destroying men's faith in its authority.

“Thou. . . hast not denied my name.” When the members of the church at Philadelphia were brought before cruel magistrates in times of persecution, they were called upon to renounce the name of Christ publicly. In such awful times the members of this church

refused to deny or disown the Person and work of Christ. They were not ashamed to confess Him before men even if it meant ridicule or death.

THE CONFIRMATION (v. 9)

Christ promised to cause their enemies to see how much value He placed upon this faithful church: **“Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.”**

The enemies of this church were evidently a Jewish synagogue which bitterly opposed them. They were Jews in profession, but not in practice. They claimed to be Jews, but they had not the faith in Christ that Abraham had (Rom. 9:6). They were called **“the synagogue of Satan,”** for all opposition to the Lord's church is from the Prince of Darkness. One day these false teachers will be made to worship before the feet of this church. One day the Lord will vindicate His people and the truth they have preached. What a glorious privilege New Testament Baptist churches will have when all false churches will be made to recognize them as the bride of Christ and to worship before their feet.

THE CONSOLATION (v. 10)

An outstanding compliment is given the Philadelphia Church. In verse 10: **“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”** This is an exhortation to patient continuance in well doing. By keeping the Word which enjoined patience, they could be certain Christ would keep them out of the universal trials coming upon

the earth.

The time of world-wide trial referred to is the Great Tribulation. No local suffering could be said to **“come upon all the world”** and **“to try them that dwell upon earth.”** Furthermore, a search of church history fails to reveal any special visitation of Christ to the church at Philadelphia in times past. Therefore, the time of which Christ speaks must be the Great Tribulation. Even if there were a minor fulfillment in the history of the Philadelphia Church, it would not preclude the complete fulfillment reserved for the end-time. Can Christ not keep His churches out of the Great Tribulation if He so desires? Has Christ not clearly expressed His desire to do so here? The words of Christ in this passage teach a pre-trib rapture; they prove Christ will not merely deliver His churches from the trial but from the period of time in which the trial occurs.

THE CROWN (v. 11)

Verse 11 demonstrates the means by which Christ is to deliver His churches from the period of world-wide suffering. They are to be delivered out of the Great Tribulation by the Rapture and the Judgment Seat of Christ: **“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”** This is the speedy and unannounced coming of Christ from Heaven. Nothing promotes a church's steadfastness in the good profession of Christ's name any more than the thought that His coming is at hand.

Those who do not waver in their Christian profession are to be crowned by the returning Christ. The Philadelphia Church was expected to hold fast to Christ's Word, Christ's name, Christ's patience and Christ's coming. To desert any of these would be to

lose their crown (Col. 2:18; II John 8). Our rewards are connected with Christ's return. They are contingent upon our holding fast--our unflinching loyalty to the faith and unswerving devotion to Christ. The truth taught here is that by negligence in duty we may deprive ourselves of the glory which we might have obtained if we had been faithful to the Savior.

THE COMFORT (v. 12)

The promise to the overcomer is seen in verse 12: **“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my new name.”** There are two great promises here and a threefold inscription.

First, I see that Christ promised the overcomer that He would make him **“a pillar in the temple”** of His God. It was customary with nations in ancient times to erect pillars or columns in honorable memorial of their heroes. Absalom, the son of David, in the Old Testament built a pillar with his name upon it (II San. 18:18). The practice is seen in the Grecian fable of “the Pillars of Hercules.”

King Solomon built a magnificent temple in Jerusalem which was supported by numerous pillars (I Kings 6-7), but these pillars were insufficient to protect it against the Chaldeans and the Romans. But it shall not be so with those in the Christian church. They shall form a permanent part of the heavenly temple: **“He shall go no more out.”** The Christian conqueror is to have an honorable memorial ◊ (Continued on page 8)

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in God's temple above. Those who are pillars of the church on earth (Gal. 2:9) shall be pillars in the heavenly sanctuary. Their high position is a fixed and eternal one; they shall not be moved!

Second, Christ promised a threefold inscription: **"I will write upon him the name of my God."** The overcomer will wear the brand of Heaven; he will bear in his body the marks of God's ownership. To be branded with the Divine name will be a public testimony to angels that the overcomer belongs to God. Revelation 22:4 says: **"And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads."**

The overcomer is to have the name of **"the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem"** inscribed upon him. This denotes the victorious believer is a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem. He will live in a mansion in the Father's house of **"many mansions"** (John 14:1-3). The New Jerusalem is now in the third Heaven. Paul called it in Galatians 4:26 the **"Jerusalem which is above."** This city is to come down from God out of Heaven after the 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth. It is described in great detail in Revelation chapter 21.

Then it is said that the name of Christ will be graven for ever on each one of this conquering band of heroes. Much is revealed of Christ in His names in the Bible. Much more will be revealed in His new name bestowed upon Him for His redeeming work (Phil. 2:9-11). Those who have labored in His name on earth will bear His name publicly for eternity. Then it will be manifest to all that the elect belong to Christ because they were redeemed by Him.

In the religious world there are so many professed Christians who want to make a name for themselves. They want church buildings and Bible college buildings named after them. It seems that they are like Absalom of old. They want a name on earth; they want the praise of men while they live as a pilgrim in this world. How much better it would be for them to be more concerned about obtaining the name of God. The name of the New Jerusalem, and the new name of Christ. How far superior to have a pillar with your name on it in the New Jerusalem than an earthly pillar with your name upon it in this perishing world.

There is a day coming when Christ will give us some everlasting names. It is said that one time the people made much over the name of George Whitefield. They wanted him to have some great memorial on earth. He told them: "Let the name of George Whitefield be forgotten, but let the name of Christ be remembered forever."

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."



The Errors of Elihu

By Matthew Stepp
of Wayne, West Virginia

(Continued from May issue.)

CHAPTER 35 OF JOB

V. 2: Again, Elihu purports to be "quoting" Job, here. Beloved reader, please, I beg of you to find this quote in Scripture. Where in the world? Actually, I know, in the world of Elihu and his three

compadres that have heard Job claim integrity and righteousness, without understanding that those very attributes of Job come from God. There is a reason that Elihu makes this completely unfounded statement, though. It is because of the fact that a lost man, will "never" be able to comprehend the salvation of Jesus Christ in the saints. Job speaks of God as his Sovereign Afflictor, and then cries out to Him for justice and restitution. Elihu can only see this as Job saying his cause is more righteous than God! Because he mistakes the relationship God has bestowed upon His precious children. John 15:14-15, 18: **"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. . . If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you."** The world of Elihu hates this "love" that they have never experienced and will never comprehend it.

Even the pro-Elihu commentators have to scratch their heads at some of these more obvious misconstructions of Elihu. Why they work so hard to defend this rascal, I will never know! He is not worth it!

V. 3: I do not know whether Elihu is referencing 21:15, where Job is obviously referring to the **"wicked"** of 21:7 who are questioning, like Pharaoh of Egypt, **"Who is this God?"** Or whether he is referencing 9:30-31. In that quotation, Job is denying any good that could come of works, or "turning over a new leaf." God will not honor such "righteousness," but as Isaiah puts it: **"...we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;**

and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away" (Isa. 64:6). Either way, Elihu has misunderstood and Job is doctrinally sound and Elihu is wrong.

Vs. 4-8: Echoes of Eliphaz again from 22:1-4 and Zophar also from 11:5-10. All three are correct only in their assessment of the Salitariness of God. **"If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him?"** The tender God of the heavens is "grieved" at sin, Elihu. He sends mercy and grace to His precious children! That is what Job is "expecting" and longing for! And it is "exactly" what Noah found. Genesis 6:5-8: **"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually, . . . and it grieved him at his heart. . . . But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD."** Truly, an Arminian will "never" understand the Book of Job! Its richest truths and blessings are found wrapped up in the precious T.U.L.I.P. Doctrines of the Sovereign Grace of Almighty God! Ezekiel 33:11: **"Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"**

Vs. 9-13: Elihu is very confident that God will not answer Job's prayers, at least until Job confesses that "Great Sin" that he is so sure is the root cause of Job's calamity. **"There they cry, but none giveth answer, because of the pride of evil men."** Job, it is your pride. The pride of evil men! **"Surely God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it."** Until you get things right with God, you

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are right there among the evil men and your prayers are vanity and empty. God will not regard it--or so says Elihu.

V. 14: This is among the most ludicrous statements that Elihu makes. Elihu is essentially saying that "Job, you can not see God, because you do not have enough faith!" He is telling Job to trust God? The man who is weeping "unto" his God? Job 16:17-20: **"Not for any injustice in mine hands: also my prayer is pure. O earth, cover not thou my blood, and let my cry have no place. Also now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high. My friends scorn me: but mine eye poureth out tears unto God."** Job 19:23-25: **"Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! For I know that my redeemer liveth..."** Faith? That is all the man has left! Even the New Testament writer James knows that from his reading of the Book of Job. James 5:10-11: **"Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy."** Job's patience and faith are a beacon to everyone that knows the **"end of the Lord."** Elihu does not know God and does not see Job's faith.

V. 15: Atrociously, Elihu's indictment continues. Because he perceives a lack of faith and trust in Job, he claims that God is "angry" with Job. And that Job does not see the desperate straits

that he is in. Recrimination from the Sovereign of the Universe! Surely, this verse, if any of Elihu's statements do so, shows that he is a reprobate and lost in his sin. It shows Elihu's absolute deficiency of any understanding of God's grace, or even His eternal love. Certainly God will judge His own, but anger is reserved for the wicked. Psalms 7:10-11: **"My defence is of God, which saveth the upright in heart. God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day."** An unceasing anger, that is reserved for Esau, whom God hated, not for Jacob, Jeremiah, or Job, for whom God's love is eternal. I Thessalonians 5:8-9: **"But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."** Why does not Elihu ever pray with Job for salvation? Why is it always that he prays for judgment? Because Elihu never prays to a God of Grace. It never crosses his mind, that anything but works will have any effect upon God and the dire straits of Job's calamity. Pray for grace!

V. 16: Reiterating his condemnation of Job in 34:35-37, Elihu is very acrimonious and disrespectful, to the degree that modern liberals have become accustomed to. It is nothing to Elihu that Job is an elder; a great man of God. To Elihu, unless Job will humble himself to repeat the "Wise Words of Elihu," any opening of his mouth is vanity. **". he multiplieth words without knowledge."** Mark these words well, Elihu, for they are true! But "not" concerning Job. God Himself will answer for Job in chapter 38, and he will condemn

you with these very words. Elihu is the one guilty of multiplying **"words without knowledge."**

CHAPTER 36 OF JOB

Vs. 1-4: Blasphemy on three counts in three verses. Elihu claims to be "God's mouth." He claims "inerrancy" and "omniscience in perfect knowledge." It matters little to try to say that Elihu is speaking of God's omniscience in v. 4, because he is still attributing it unto himself and takes upon himself the mantle of divinity. Job might well answer Elihu here as he did the three friends: 21:34: **"How then comfort ye me in vain, seeing in your answers there remaineth falsehood?"** Despite Elihu's illusions of grandeur, his answers to Job never hit the mark. What Job needs is mercy and grace. Elihu never offers that. Even as we are approaching Elihu's grand soliloquy in his final chapter---search in vain for the message of John the Baptist, yet to come. John 1:29: **"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."**

Vs. 5-18: This next passage gives an overview of the doctrine of both Elihu and the three friends previously. It is the same "Prosperity Gospel" ad nauseum that has been stuffed down Job's throat in the previous eight accusations and which Elihu now continues to propagate. Reference 8:3-7; 11:13-20; 22:21-30, et al, and see their similarities to this passage.

Vs. 8-10: While these verses have good meaning in general application, they are maliciously rehashed arguments that Job has heard the entire book. Nothing new is brought out by Elihu. Just "repent, Job, and everything will be all right!"

Vs. 11-12: The "Health and

Wellness" gospel in a nutshell. Every affliction is because of sin in your life, Job. Look at us, who are not guilty of your secret sin. God knows us, and that is why we are spending our days in prosperity. I can see Joel Osteen's big smile on Elihu's face, as I type.

Vs. 13-17: Elihu calls Job a hypocrite; calls him unclean and then dangles the "carrot of hope" in front of Job, hoping to lure him into denouncing his faith in God's Holy Justice. Oh, but Job! Your **". table should be full of fatness."** **"But thou hast fulfilled the judgment of the wicked: judgment and justice take hold on thee."** You are only getting what you are deserving, Job! And you will only get more of the same, unless you repent and come clean with whatever sin it is that you are hiding.

Where does Elihu get this great knowledge and insight into the life of this beleaguered saint of God? I guess that I could stomach some of what Elihu was trying to teach Job, if he would just quit calling this (brother in Christ?) "wicked," "unclean," and a "hypocrite." That is what Elihu's greatest errors have led to---to resort to unfounded allegations and repetitious name-calling.

V. 18: I do not know if Elihu would call it that, but it seems to be the thrust of this verse: "Job, you are on the verge of committing the unpardonable sin!" As some free-willers of today might phrase it: "Job, you are going to lose your salvation, if you do not come back quickly. Your back-sliding has gone on long enough. Confess your great sin and come back to the fold of safety." As if any could ever pluck Job from the security of God's unchanging hand. That God would punish any of His children to the point of no return is a

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gross misunderstanding of even the chastising hand of God. The purpose of God and His discipline is always for our good, both now and ultimately.

Vs. 17-21: More accusations of wickedness (v. 17) and of being one that chooses iniquity (v. 21) over correction via affliction. Job certainly is not guilty of either of these.

Vs. 22-33: Elihu is now warming up for his concluding remarks. Except for a couple of veiled remarks that would include his arraignment of Job on counts of blasphemy against the glory of God, the remainder of this chapter and all of chapter 37 will be Elihu's attempt to show Job the mighty gulf to span between Glorious God and puny man. How well he succeeds will be determined by context. If we lift these verses out of their proper place in the Book of Job, we might well find ourselves "Amen"ing and thinking what a profound and wonderful fellow this Elihu must be to know such deep and wondrous truths. But we cannot forget either the framework laid in this book, nor the callous superciliousness of the man speaking. God has allowed lost men before to make true statements and then record them in His Holy Book (Balaam, for instance), but that changes not their spiritual condition before His holy eyes. What were the words of Christ? Matthew 23:1-7: **"Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. 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. But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi." This is the ultimate condemnation of Elihu, the Pharisee. All his words eventually point to himself and his perceived knowledge of God.

CHAPTER 37 OF JOB

Vs. 1-9: All the evidence I have seen in Elihu's words thus far cause me to question which **"heart trembleth."** Certainly not the heart of the Philippian jailor, but rather only Elihu's "emotional" heart has been touched by his grandiose speech. James 2:19: **"Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble."**

Vs. 10-13: This is the only other passage in the chapter that I would like to point out. Certainly, no doubt, the **"breath of God"** could come for these three reasons. Because until now, Elihu has not considered any other recourse for Job's calamity, than correction, which is the first (and thereby primary?) cause of God's stroke of affliction. Elihu is right (for the first time?) in that the breath of God can wreck havoc in our lives for some other purpose than correction. It could be judgment upon a land (such as America is currently heading into), or it could be for mercy. Oh, that Elihu might consider this an option in the case of Job's calamity! But he never does. An inherent hatred of Job oozes throughout the speaking of Elihu. Never does a tender word or a kind thought cross the

pages of his entire six chapters. Elihu's entire assessment of Job is malicious and disgraceful.

Vs. 14-24: Is anybody else amazed at what God says in chapters 38-39? Really, in all his poetry continuing thru chapter 41. If God is going to answer the questions of this book, then perhaps we might expect a revelation to Job and the four other characters of what happened in His dialogue with Satan in the first two chapters. But that simply does not happen. It does not even occur in the epilogue chapter 42. God "never" answers the questions raised by Eliphaz, then Bildad, then Zophar, and finally Elihu. Even Job may be included in this desire to know why this great calamity has occurred. God does not use His space to deign to reply to His created beings what His great purpose is. But we know! We got to read the first two chapters! They are the Hingepin upon which this Great Book of God's Sovereign Grace swings!

And the marvelous thing is that Job did not really need to be told, because as we travel through the book with him, he finds out that he already knew all along. The great text verses and sermons God gave him along the way, really made the journey the point of the whole matter. And that is what afflictions in our life will do for us, also. It will cause us to see the answer was always right in front of our noses. God is there for us. In valleys, as well as the mountains. Psalms 23:1-6: **"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. I will fear no evil: for**

thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever."

So, if God is not going to tell the tale and set things right, what is He going to say? As we finish up the words of Elihu, the proper continuance of this precise and balanced book would be for patient Job to get back up on the podium and speak words of grace, knowledge and wisdom, as he has throughout the book. But an amazing thing happens! If the beloved reader will accommodate me, a more amazing thing happens even than the great calamity that destroyed all of Job's possessions within one hour. Please, beloved reader, do not underestimate the marvelous miracle that happens at the conclusion of Elihu's long and tedious harangue. A mighty whirlwind descends upon all those dumbstruck witnesses! And out of that whirlwind, the VOICE OF GOD speaks!

It is Job's turn to speak, but instead God brushes him aside and determines that this rascal Elihu shall not be allowed to have his words stand. Not before a Thrice Holy God! Note that 38:1 does not use the word "rebuke" that virtually every commentator on this passage would have you believe. God "answers" Job! Praise God! What the effectual and fervent prayers of Job all throughout this book have requested time and again, has happened. God did not have to! But He does, anyway. By His marvelous grace, He answers Job and rebukes the preceding six chapters of Elihu with an

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The Errors of Elihu

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overpowering, stupendous display of a true Sovereign of Majesty and Order. **“Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?”** He thunders in 38:2. Turning Elihu’s words of 34:35; 35:16 back onto himself, God vindicates His servant Job, who has **“spoken of me the thing that is right.”** The humble Job would never have thought that his own words were any great words of knowledge or wisdom, that is why he includes himself in the insignificant words of mankind in 40:4-5 and 42:2-3, but God does not. God values the words of Job, as the words of a faithful servant.

To make chapters 38-39 a rebuke of Job’s perceived fault (secret sin or overzealous self-righteousness) is to make God call Job’s words **“without knowledge,”** instead of Elihu’s. And that would tear apart this marvelous book and upend God’s purposes of submitting His faithful servant to this entire episode of affliction. The purpose of the Book (and God’s open chapters) is not to skewer Job and examine his particular faults. It is to show God’s grace and mercy through this willing and obedient servant. To conclude else, is to thwart the context and turn the book upside down.

I have taken the time and space to write this article entitled the “Errors of Elihu.” I have found material overflowing for my exegesis. Is there anyone in the last 4,000 years that can write as extensively upon the “Errors of Job?” That is indeed the crux of the matter, is it not? Either Job or Elihu is wrong. One or the other! Being on diametrical sides, they cannot both be right. And the beloved reader cannot take the

cop-out, that they are both wrong, because God justifies Job in the first chapters and again in the Epilogue final chapter (actually, throughout the book). That is why I deem it so important to point out the errors of Elihu. If we give him the free ride that he desires, and that so many commentators do, then we end up with Job in the wrong. And that is wrong. Unforgivable! We will end up lining behind Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar in the Millennial Reign, asking Job to forgive us and to make a sacrifice for us, as well. I do not want to have to do that! I do not want to unduly exalt any man, outside of our Lord Jesus Christ, but I do not know where else to place this godly man, than where Scripture places him. Job 1:8: **“And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?”** Job 2:3: **“And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause.”** Job 42:7-10: **“And it was so, that after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly,**

in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job. So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the LORD commanded them: the LORD also accepted Job. And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.”

Final thoughts on Elihu: The reason so many try desperately to find good in Elihu, is because God does not mention him in the epilogue chapter of 42. God singles out Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. He requires them to come before Job and humbly acknowledge their errors and Job’s righteousness. Job passes this final exam with flying colors and prays for them. Amazing Grace, eh? Required even from God’s servants! But where is Elihu’s condemnation? As well ask where is Elihu’s commendation! Why would the absence of the one, lead to the conclusion of the other? There are two reasons for his exclusion, but in reality, it could be just that God chose to ignore this (in my mind) young upstart blowhard.

The first reason is that the Book of Job “does” include Elihu’s condemnation. The parallel poetry of chapter 37 by Elihu, being dwarfed by the personal poetry of God’s Words in the next two, cannot be missed. If God were speaking to rebuke Job, a much different tack would have been necessary. But to rebuke Elihu, the wording, context, and purpose are perfect. “Who are you? NOTHING!?” While it is easy to find application for Job and every other person ever born upon the face of the earth in this comparison, Elihu is the primary target: 1) according to the metric

nature of the book; 2) the style of the response and 3) the effect of silencing Elihu forever.

Final reason for Elihu’s absence in chapter 42, is that Elihu was lost, a reprobate. Romans 1:18, 24: **“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness’ of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts. . .”** The inclusion of the three friends in chapter 42, is in an act of Grace. Despite all the hard feelings incurred by the beloved reader and Job throughout their vicious attacks and false mediations, they must be saved, because God goes out of His way to provide (thru Job) an acceptable sacrifice for them. That God does not do so for Elihu is the weightiest condemnation conceivable for Elihu. If truth be told, God does not care about Elihu, never has, never will. Romans 9:13: **“As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”** All of the loneliness of Hell is rushing down upon reprobates like Elihu! Oh, sinner, will you not consider your rebellious and recalcitrant ways before a Holy God? Do not prate about righteousness and sovereignty. Do not lecture about omnipotence and omniscience. Just consider yourself as a sinner, without a hope in this world, unless God would have grace upon you. Plead, not your self-righteous condition, but plead that the grace of the Holy Spirit might open your eyes to see Jesus Christ as the hope of, not just Job, but me, you, and Elihu, as well. Grace, that is what we need, amazing Grace.



The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

1. I keep hearing a lot about the “replacement theology”: what is it, and is it Biblical?

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This is probably the easiest question I have had to answer. That is because I have never heard the term so I would not have any idea how to answer it.

But I did make this observation; the word theology stood out to me. It means the study of religion; especially the Christian faith and God's relation to the world. More specifically, the study of God, Theo; meaning God, ology meaning study. I told a real good friend and brother in the Lord one time when we were debating a particular subject in my early Christian years (do not recall the subject) that I was no theologian. And that is when I learned about the word, and never forgot it. I may say of myself that I am no scholar, but I am a theologian because I study God's Word.

So I suppose that if one is trying to replace the study of God with something else, then that person is an “infidel,” **“And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel”** (II Cor. 6:15)? **“But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel”** (I Tim. 5:8).

An infidel is an unlearned... unbeliever in religious matters. So I guess, we can answer the question even though I have never heard the term “Replacement Theology” by saying, if one is trying to replace God, then no it is not scriptural and I would encourage the reader to stay far from the very thought of the term. **“I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living”** (Matt. 22:32). **“And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him”** (Luke 9:35).

Hillary Clinton just made these two statements at the end of April: 1) According to a report by Fox News yesterday, Hillary Clinton, the former secretary of state has announced that religious beliefs must change to support abortion. Not only did the Democratic presidential candidate speak in favor of abortion but she also supported the contraceptive mandate in Obamacare. 2) Hillary Clinton has a message for people of faith—Christians, Muslims and Orthodox Jews: Your faith shall not be tolerated.

Not “I disagree” or “I urge you to reconsider.” No, Hillary wants devout Catholics, evangelicals and Muslims to know: She will not tolerate your “deep-seated... religious beliefs.” They gotta go! (quoted from the Blog of Michael Graham).

Is this “Replacement Theology”... if so, BEWARE!! God Bless!

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Replacement theology is not Biblical. The New Testament Church has not taken the place of Israel. Israel will always be God's chosen nation and will be restored, or in better use of words, will be reconciled to God before the thousand year reign of Christ.

The New Testament Church is separate from Israel and will not suffer the seven years of Jacob's trouble. The Church will be raptured out of this world with all the saints before the seven year tribulation.

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Replacement theology teaches that the “church” has replaced Israel in God's plan. The tenets of replacement theology have their origin in the heresies of the Roman Catholic Church, which attempted to usurp the promises God made to Israel by applying them to the Universal Catholic Church. After the Protestant Reformation many Protestant denominations began to apply the same theory of interpretation to the Universal Invisible Church as the recipient of Israel's promises. Replacement theology is basically a fancy name for the old a-millennial heresy that chooses to spiritualize the

promises made to Israel and apply them to the “mythical universal visible/invisible church.” Instead of believing the plain and literal promises made to God's chosen people, Israel, the replacement theologian decides when and where to apply the promises to the “mythical universal visible/invisible church.” Why Landmark Baptists or any other stripe of Baptist would borrow from Catholic and Protestant heresy is a mystery to me.

There is no doubt that after the Lord Jesus started His New Testament Baptist Church during His earthly ministry, He began to work through the church in the form of the Great Commission. For 2000 years the church of the Lord Jesus Christ has been the institution that God has used to spread the Gospel and stand for truth. However, God has never nullified or taken away any promises to the nation of Israel. In fact, Romans 11 clearly states that God will graft elect Israel back into His plan after the fullness of the Gentiles be come in (Rom. 11:22-29). A real problem for the replacement theologians is the miraculous existence of the nation of Israel even while they are in unbelief! They are now in the land promised to them by God as an “**everlasting possession**” (Gen. 17:6-8). Israel officially gained nation status in 1948. Hitler tried to exterminate the Jews. Anti-Semitism is rampant throughout the world. The Muslims want to wipe Israel off the map. In spite of all the attempts by Jew haters they can not seem to exterminate God's chosen nation. The reason for their existence is simple, God is not done with Israel. He will fulfill every promise made to His chosen nation.

The Scriptures relating to

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. What are some good autobiographies that Christians should read?



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At times in my life I have been a voracious reader, and biographies have been a large part of that. If you can find them, there was a "Landmark" series from the sixties (1960's!) that covered many famous historical people from a children's perspective. Ones that I particularly remember well are *Ferdinand Magellan* (my favorite!), *Paul Revere*, *John Paul Jones* and *Winston Churchill*. They were well-researched and had the goal in mind to instill some of those same great heroic qualities in the young readers of our age.

That has changed in this last generation. Now, the purpose of most biographies are to "make them human"- to point out (or many times invent) failures and moments of weakness, with the purpose of bringing our heroes down to the level of the masses. The disparity is shown clearly in two VASTLY different biographies of general and president George Washington. I highly recommend Anna Reed's *Life of Washington* that was actually published by a Sunday School committee. It is a good read and much profit in it. But I was recently appalled at reading James Burns version of the life of George Washington. It is amazing what a spin one can put on the life of even a famous person such as our first president,

just by leaving out critical religious aspects of this very strong Christian. No references to God were made in this astoundingly terrible book, and Mr. Burns even had the temerity to claim that Washington was an integral part of the budding humanism elements that have nearly ruined this once great nation. Selah! Think about it!

Other biographies about the founding fathers must be judged on this same critique: usually the older the book, the more true it is and by far the better. A few exceptions are from conservative writers today such as Richard Labunski's *James Madison and the Struggle for the Bill of Rights* and David McCullough's *John Adams*.

To the Golden Shore by Courtney Anderson is a must read biography of Adoniram Judson, the converted Baptist missionary to Burma. As we consider the Baptist saints down through the ages, I would recommend Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, *Bright Lights in Dark Times* and Berlin Hisel's *Baptist History Notebook* to show synopses of the lives of men and women that have given their lives for the LORD and His Word. *William Tyndale: A Biography* by David Daniell is just one example. *God's Secretaries: The Making of the King James Bible* is another. More modern autobiographies of persecuted Christians are Georgi Vins and Richard Wurmbrand. I would highly recommend going to the Voice of the Martyrs website and getting a free copy of *Tortured for Christ*.

Rhapsody in Black is the story of John Jasper, an American

preacher, saved while still a slave in Richmond, Virginia. It is a book that one of the deacons of our church here gave me to read, that left lasting impressions for the zeal of new Christians and new preachers. The gospel and a love for our Saviour is what we all need, for our labors to be acceptable to God.

From a different perspective, *30 Years a Watchtower Slave* by William Schnell is a good read about coming out of the so-called Jehovah's Witnesses. Personal accounts of folks that have come out of Mormonism and Catholicism are also interesting examples of God's power to deliver His sheep in our generation.

The ultimate autobiography is the Bible! It is God's revelation of Himself to mankind. Read it thoroughly and often! God will certainly bless ALL periods of time devoted to meditating upon God's Word. Stephen Charnock's *A Portrait of God* or Arthur W. Pink's *The Sovereignty of God* and *The Attributes of God* will help you understand the uniqueness of our God and His Autobiography.

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I have a complete set all nicely bound in the same design that I ordered from a Christian bookstore entitled "Heroes Of The Faith." They are not per se autobiographies but they are an account of their lives. They are as follows:

John Bunyan
Fanny Crosby
Charles G. Finney

David Livingstone
Martin Luther
Dwight L. Moody
George Muller
Mary Slessor
C. H. Spurgeon
John Wesley
George Whitefield

Although we do not agree with some of the things these men and women believed, they were great in their FAITH and that makes them worth reading about. Also, I would recommend Letters of A. W. Pink and The Life Of Arthur W. Pink. Hope these help...God Bless!

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I do not have any recommendations other than the Holy Bible. For me the Bible has all I need.

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I started reading biographies and autobiographies of Christians right after the Lord saved me. Reading biographies has been one of the most pleasant treats in my spiritual journey. The following list is a sampling of those I have read over the past 35 years:

Charles Haddon Spurgeon: *The Early Years*; *The Full Harvest*.

The Prince of Preachers by

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Forum #1

(Continued from page 12) ♦

the promised future of Israel are overwhelming. God will regenerate, restore, and reconcile elect Israel in His time and according to His sure word of prophecy. The same God who foretold of the apostasy of the nation of Israel and the judgments that would result from it, also promised that He would restore the nation of Israel spiritually as well as physically. If one set of prophecies are to be understood literally then the other set must likewise be interpreted literally (Lev. 26:21, 33, 42-45; Deut. 30:3-6; Jer. 16:13-15; 31:10-12; Ezek. 39:27-29). The covenants God made with Israel regarding their land, the throne of David, and their ultimate salvation all insure a literal future for Israel (Isa. 54:7-10; Jer. 31:35-37; Rom. 11:1-2, 28-29; Gen. 17:19; 26:3-5; 28:13-15; 35:9-15; Jer. 32:37-41; Psa. 89:29-37; 105:10; Isa. 9:6-7; Jer. 23:5-8; Luke 1:31-33; Matt. 19:28; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:24-28; Zech. 12:8-10).

I love the quote from John Gill, the Baptist expositor of the 1700's, who commented on Hosea 3:5:

"The ten tribes of Israel, and also the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, which are included in the name of Israel...and these are joined together in parallel places; see Jer. 30:3, 9 and 50:2, 5; for though they did not go into captivity together, yet their return and conversion will be at the same time; and they are all spoken of under the name of Israel by the apostle Paul, when he foretells their conversion and salvation, Rom. 11:26. The return of them, here prophesied of, does not barely mean their return to their own land, which will be at this time; see Jer. 30:3; Ezek. 37:21-

22; Amos 9:15, but their return to the Lord by repentance; when they shall repent of, and turn from, either sinful course of life, and particularly of their unbelief and rejection of the true Messiah, and embrace Him; and of their traditions and false ways of worship, which they shall discard; and of their own righteousness they shall now renounce; and shall turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe in Him for righteousness, life, and salvation" (Vol. 6, p. 392).

TOM ROSS



"Replacement Theology" is a relatively new eschatology view, where the promises that God has made to the nation of Israel are granted to the universal church propagated by the Protestant denominations. Mostly Reformed baptists and other Amillennial proponents are espousing this theory, because Israel as a regathered nation does not fit in with their other fabrications concerning the end times. Selah! Think about it!

The Bible proclaims repeatedly a pretribulational rapture of the churches and church age saints. This imminent event will herald in the Great Tribulation, which will fulfill Daniel's seventieth week, where God once again will deal exclusively through His beloved nation of reunited Israel. **"And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations**

he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate" (Dan. 9:27).

Those that try to prove a Post Tribulational (or Post Millennial) rapture of the Lord's churches, must of NECESSITY force the Lord's true New Testament Baptist churches to endure through the horrors and judgments of that terrible time of Jacob's trouble. This CANNOT be validated in the book of Revelation, where the churches are not seen after the Rapture (pictured in Revelation 4:1), until the second advent of Revelation 19 at the Battle of Armageddon, where Jesus Christ fulfills the Zechariah 14:4 prophecy and returns with His Bride (Rev. 19:7-8, 14; I Thess. 5:9).

But the Nation of Israel will have to suffer at the hands of the Anti-christ for those seven years. After almost 2000 years of diaspora, some have given up on God's longsuffering and have (like Abraham) tried to "replace" Isaac with another. This time the church of Jesus Christ, instead of Ishmael. No matter what the "replacement" or "substitution," it will not work. Too many prophecies specifically mandated for the eternality of God's covenant people stand in the way. **"Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether**

unpunished" (Jer. 30:10-11).

The root source of such a replacement theology is rootless Baptists! So many Baptists (so-called) today do not believe (trust) in a chain-link succession of authority based on Matthew 16:18, **"...and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."** Reformed baptists and Arminian baptists alike think that the Lord's precious churches went out of existence during the Dark Ages and had to be reorganized by mere men in the Reformation. NOT HARDLY!!! The bright lights of the Lord's churches shine through the Dark Ages from the Montanists and Donatists of the early centuries through the legacies of the Cathari, Albigenses and Waldenses. These (Ana) Baptists never wavered in their stand for the truth and God fulfilled His promise of perpetuity to His pillar and ground of the truth.

As surely as God has preserved His churches in this age, He has also just as surely preserved the remnants of His twelve tribes! A minimum of 12,000 have been sealed from each tribe (Revelation 7:4-8) and the 144,000 witnesses will go forth preaching the everlasting gospel and much of Israel will be saved by God's sovereign grace. **"And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, (3.5 years- tms) from the face of the serpent"** (Rev. 12:13-14). **"And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek**

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Forum #1

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to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn" (Zech. 12:9-10).

No need for a replacement theology! God is doing just fine with plan A! Israel will yet be restored to a place of prominence, both as a nation and as a fulfillment of Bible Prophecy. Selah! Think about it!

MATTHEW STEPP



Forum #2

(Continued from page 13) ◊

Lewis Drummond

Charles Spurgeon by Dan Harmon

The Forgotten Spurgeon by Ian Murray

A. W. Pink: The Life of A.W. Pink by Ian Murray

Arthur W. Pink: Born to Write by Richard Belcher

The Life and Times of Isaac Backus by Alvah Hovey

The Splendor of God: The Life of Adoniram Judson by Honoré Morrow

The Life, Times, and Teachings of J.R. Graves by O.L. Hailey

The Life of James Ireland by Arthur Johnson

The Life of John Gill by John Rippon

The Life and Letters of John Broadus by A.T. Robertson

William Carey by Mary Dreary

John Bunyan by William Harding

Memoir and Remains of R.M. McCheyne by Andrew Bonar

John Jasper by W.E. Hatcher

Fanny Crosby's Story by S. Jackson

Autobiography of Robert Flockhart

C.T. Studd by Norman Grubb

Gipsy Smith by David Lazell

Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret by Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor

John Brown of Haddington by Robert Mackenzie

Memories of Sandfields by Bethan Lloyd-Jones

The Mercies of a Covenant God by John Warburton

Letters and Memoir of Joseph Charles Philpott

Strength for the Journey by Jerry Falwell

Dwight Moody by W.R. Moody

The Life of George Mueller by William Harding

Daws: The Story of Dawson Trotman, Founder of the Navigators by Betty Skinner

Charles Finney by C.G. Finney

Portrait of Obedience; The Biography of R.T. Ketchum by J. Murdoch

Inside History: The Story of J. Frank Norris

Baptist Piety: The Last Will and Testament of Obadiah Holmes by Edwin Gaustad

Sermons and Memoirs of Christmas Evans

Memories of J.P. Boyce by John Broadus

The Life and Labors of Asahel Nettleton by Bennet Tyler

TOM ROSS



The Agony of Our

(Continued from page 1) ◊

which would be a very dry place in "the mountain of God." It was

there that Moses beheld a bush that in the midst, or middle, was a fire that burned and out of which the Lord spoke to him. Moses was astonished that this bush was not consumed. That word for "bush" according to the Hebrew lexicon was a "thorny bush." Why did the Lord choose from such a bush to speak to His servant Moses? It is interesting that thorns are associated with the curse in Genesis 3:18 which our father Adam brought upon all of his posterity. In Exodus we are told that it was the Angel of the Lord that spoke to Moses, but it was not a created angel but the "I AM," the very Son of God. As Jesus said, **"Before Abraham was, I am"** (John 8:58). So that thorny bush in dry ground represented our substitute. Did not Isaiah speak of the suffering substitute as a **"root out of a dry ground"** in Isaiah chapter 53 verse 2? That place where Moses met the Lord was holy ground and I think Spurgeon had it right when he said that Gethsemane was also "holy ground." When I think of that thorny bush I am reminded that our blessed Lord was **"made a curse"** for His people (Gal. 3:13).

Now, dear reader, let us put off our worldly shoes and go to that scene in the garden. Just as in a garden the first Adam plunged his posterity into ruin, so, too, in a garden the second and last Adam would begin the redemption of His posterity from that awful ruin. When Spurgeon wrote of this scene he wanted to be very cautious to harmonize our Savior's deity with His humanity. If we are not careful we may minimize one or the other. I pray we do not do that in this article.

I call the reader to open their Bible and read the following passages, Matthew 26:36-44; Mark 14:32-41; Luke 22:39-44.

For reasons of space we will not quote every one of these passages, but will quote Mark's gospel and reference the others.

"And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch. And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt. And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour? Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak. And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words. And when he returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer him. And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners" (Mark 14:32-41).

In Matthew's and Mark's account we see that when He entered the garden on this occasion something began that had not begun on previous trips here. Mark says He **"began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy."** Both Matthew and Mark tell us that He began to be **"exceeding sorrowful, even unto**

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The Agony of Our

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death. Then our Savior utters a prayer that at first glance seems to be very perplexing when He said, **“Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.”** And from these accounts it appears that the Lord did this three times and even fell on His face. Then in Luke’s account we see that this agony was so great that His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground (Luke 22:44).

An explanation of some of these words is in order at this point. The Greek word for **“sore amazed”** means “to throw into terror or amazement.” Strong’s says, “to astonish utterly, to affright.” The lexicon says concerning the phrase **“very heavy”** that it is the strongest of the Greek words for depression. The word **“agony”** signifies a great struggle. Then the phrase **“exceeding sorrowful, even unto death”** seems to be a sorrow so great as to cause one’s death. Strong says, “grieved all around.” Spurgeon said it was a sorrow with no way out. There was no escape from this sorrow.

So what would cause our Savior to come to this place of sorrow even unto death? What would cause our Savior to be thrown into terror? What caused our Savior to be in such agony that He sweat a bloody sweat? What caused our Savior to fall on His face and pray **“take away this cup from me?”** Was this terror a fear of what men could do to Him? Was He affright from the thought of simply facing death? Did He not tell His disciples **“and fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul?”** Did not many of His saints face death with peace and no fear? So why

would our blessed Lord be less in faith than they? He would not. So what was this terror all about?

A seeming paradox is the fact that Jesus had told His disciples that **“he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day”** (Matt. 16:21). Then when Peter objected and began to rebuke the Lord for such a thought, Jesus told Peter, **“Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men”** (Matt. 16:23). In another place concerning the hour of His passion Jesus said, **“for this cause came I unto this hour.”** Now we are here in the garden and the Lord prays on His face, **“Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.”** Is our blessed Lord having a change of heart? Is He bending under the pressure? Is He saying, “Lord I know I came into the world to die for sinners, but I would like to change my mind?” A thousand times no. Perish such a thought. Our Lord was absolutely impeccable. So why did He pray this way? Let me ask you this. Did our Lord ever do anything that was not perfect and necessary? I think not. I believe He had to pray that prayer. It has been said that He prayed that for our benefit. I believe that is true but in ways we will never fully understand.

Now I would like to enter into why I titled this “The agony of our substitute in Gethsemane.” It is the word “substitute” that I am interested in. The definition of the word according to the dictionary means for a person or thing to take the place of another. In substitution there is no joint

work or cooperation of effort. Here at Gethsemane it appears to be the point in time that the sins of God’s elect were laid on our Savior and He would take their place. To quote Paul, **“For he hath made him to be sin for us.”** It was after this by the permissible providence of God that He was brought before the religious court of the Sanhedrin and then before the civil court of Pilate and all the time never opening His mouth to defend Himself. Why? Because the Father had made the Son to be sin for His people. What went on in Gethsemane was our Savior experiencing emotions and fears that God’s elect should have experienced in judgment but will never experience because He took their place. Let us look at a few Scriptures to prove our point.

Paul speaks of **“the terror of the Lord”** in II Corinthians 5:11. The Psalmist said, **“How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors”** (Ps. 73:19). So the sinners who are not ever saved will be consumed with terrors in a moment. This is their “end” according to verse 17 of that Psalm. They will be thrown into terror and this is just and exactly what they deserve. This is also what God’s elect deserve as well, for they were dead in their sins and were no different. But the Lord has saved them from this sudden terror and hath endured it for them and was not consumed by the fire of God’s wrath. He endured the terror in my place. Also, the sinner will and should crumble under the terror of His wrath for the Psalmist says again, **“Thou, even thou, art to be feared: and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry”** (Ps. 76:7)? Our Lord fell on His face for His people. And again, **“Who knoweth the power**

of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath” (Ps. 90:11). Now listen to Isaiah speak of the sudden surprise and fear of the hypocrites in Isaiah 33:14, **“The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?”** This is what we are due. But remember our Lord was thrown into sudden terror as a substitute for His people. He had to experience that because we who are saved and all those who will ever be saved should have to experience that sudden horror. It was not that our Savior lacked knowledge but the surprise was something that He experienced or learned (Heb 5:8) as our substitute. Imagine yourself lost and being brought before the judge of all the earth and standing there on the precipice of eternal damnation. The sudden horror! Picture and feel the unimaginable depression of your soul. It is forever! You would be crying out that God take that cup from you, but you would not be able to say **“nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt,”** but our Lord could and did do that for us as our substitute if we are His. He felt the horror and unimaginable depression in the place of His people. The prophet Nahum said, **“Who can stand before his indignation? And who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him”** (Nahum 1:6). Our blessed Savior knew of this when He said, **“fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell”** and He said again, speaking of the serious nature of this judgment, **“and if thy hand offend thee, cut it off:**

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it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. Those that die without Christ will be in a never ending and horrible struggle. They will be in an eternal state of depression with no escape. They will be surprised and overwhelmed with horror on their death bed. Our Lord endured all of this in the place of His people. Those who would make light of eternal damnation and “everlasting burnings” need to ponder these Scriptures.

I have quoted these Scriptures to show the utter and sudden horror of the impending judgment when it begins to fall on sinners who know not the Lord Jesus Christ. Gill sights instances when men were judged guilty and sentenced to death or while being led to their execution that they broke out in a “bloody sweat” from fear. Can you imagine eternal damnation and what that would do to the soul of a human being. Dear reader, this was our due. We who are saved deserved it but our Lord sweat a bloody sweat in our place. This bloody sweat was not a physical weakness as some sickness or disease in His body. Oh no, our Lord entered into this torment in perfect physical health. Our Lord was suffering in His very soul emotionally what we who are God’s elect should have suffered. He is substituting! His sorrow and agony had weakened His flesh to the point that an angel came and strengthened Him (Luke 22:43). After all He was truly a man. Oh, He would suffer unimaginably in His body shortly, but it began in the midst of His soul; in the midst

of the bush. Isaiah said, **“Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his SOUL an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand”** (Isa. 53:10) (emph. LL). It was more than just the body of the Lord Jesus that was offered. It was His whole human nature that was offered for sin. What ended at the cross began here in Gethsemane. Only the God-man could endure such wrath, terror, agony and depression and yet not be consumed by it. He was able to drink that awful cup for His people and as Spurgeon said, “He drank it dry.” If you belong to Him then there is nothing left in that cup of indignation for you dearly beloved, because your Lord drank every drop in your place. That cup is not even wet with the dew of wrath but is as dry as the airy desert. He drank it all as our substitute. He was exceedingly sorrowful and was agonized for our sins as our substitute. Spurgeon said, “It was a struggle on a Titanic scale.” We could never be sorry for our sins as perfectly as He was sorry. We had a godly sorrow in Holy Spirit conviction but His was a perfect sorrow for sin. He suffered a horror that only those faced with eternal damnation would even come close to experiencing.

In closing let us point out that this is not a maybe-so salvation. It was one that was secured by our suffering substitute. He drank that cup dry, my dear reader. If He drank it dry, then it is dry for all the ones He drank it for. If you are a called child of God then there is nothing in that cup of indignation left for you.

I think in Holy Spirit conviction we get just a dim glimpse of what

our Lord went through in that garden, but we will never know the entire sorrow that He felt. We will never fully understand His passion. This article has been just a feeble attempt to understand it and hopefully praise our Savior for what He endured on our behalf. Who can possibly know the griefs that He bore as our substitute.

It has been said,

“Tis to God, and God alone,

That his griefs are fully known.”

WHAT A SAVIOR!



The Raising of

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about which he wrote. This word is found in John 2:11 where John speaks of the Lord’s first miracle: **“This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.”** The word translated “miracles” here is the Greek word “semeion.” Out of the 77 times the Greek word “semeion” appears in the New Testament, it is translated 50 times as “sign” in our King James Bibles. A closely related word is translated “signifying” when the Lord said, **“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me, This he said, signifying what death he should die”** (John 12:32-33). The Lord signified what death He would die – He taught them by telling them He would be lifted up from the earth. A kindred word is found in Revelation 1:1 where it is stated how Christ communicated the Book of Revelation. He **“sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John.”** That is, Christ communicated that book through signs.

It is evident that John was moved to select specific sign-

miracles which are also teaching-miracles. They serve as lessons or illustrations as to God’s ability and His purpose. Often we see miracles as only demonstrations of Christ’s power, but they are more. They are signs! They are “sign-miracles” and illustrate God’s working. Therefore we can rightly conclude that the raising of Lazarus, for example, is not just an accounting of bare facts. That Lazarus died and was resurrected by the Lord Jesus is not the question. Most certainly this event took place. But what was it designed to illustrate? What was it designed to teach us? Are we only to see the power of the Lord Jesus in the account or is there more? Was God in the order of events and the details recorded for us so that we can understand more than just the power of God and Christ’s love for His friend?

We think there is more in these miracles than just demonstrations of God’s power. When we come to the last miracle – the raising of Lazarus – we have come to the high point in John’s series of sign-miracles. The infusion of life into the dead body of Lazarus restored him once again to the life he had lost. It involved not only his body, but also his personality. After he was called forth from his tomb Lazarus was lacking nothing that he had been previously. This physical raising of the dead teaches us many things about the spiritual infusion of life that we call regeneration or the new birth. When we speak of the new birth or being born again, it is important that we understand that this is not something that a sinner accomplishes. Nor is a person born again because of something he does. This is clear in that the two marginal notes in the King James Bible for John

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3:3 & 7 (“born again”) read thus: “again: or, from above.” These two notes make clear the source of regeneration. Regeneration is a birth from above. It is a work of God alone.

Let us look at the sequence of selected main events recorded for us in John chapter eleven. (For all the details read John 11:1-44.) Verse 1 says: “**Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.**” Upon hearing of the sickness of His friend, the Lord Jesus did not do what we would expect Him to do. He did not do what Mary and Martha expected Him to do. They sent for Him. But He did not come to them as expected. Notice that we are told in verses 3-6: “**Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.**” The Lord assured His traveling congregation that this sickness would not ultimately lead to the death of Lazarus, knowing full well that He would raise Lazarus back to life. We are assured of the Lord’s love for Lazarus and his sisters. In spite of this – or rather because of His love for them all, we are told that the Lord did not rush to his aid. He did not go to comfort the sisters, but rather stayed two days more where He was.

Next the Lord directed the group to return with Him to

Judea. They remonstrated with Him against such a trip since the Jews there wanted to kill Him. Then the Lord tells them that Lazarus was asleep. This they misunderstood. They thought Lazarus must be getting better and was now able to rest. But in verses 14 and 15 we read: “**Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.**” Next we learn: “**Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already**” (v. 17).

Upon the approach of Jesus and His disciples to Bethany, one of the sisters, Martha, goes out to meet Him and said: “**...Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee**” (vs. 21-22). Following this, the Lord enters into a discussion with Martha about the resurrection, stating that Lazarus would rise again. She naturally thought of “**the resurrection at the last day**” as she believed (v. 24). Next we have Martha going to her sister, Mary, Mary’s walk to where Jesus was, and then Mary’s conversation with Jesus. We are told of the weeping of the Lord and the words of the Jews who agreed with Mary. They, too, said that if Jesus had been there He could have saved Lazarus from death. It seems everyone except Martha assumed that the Lord had come too late. They thought there was no hope for Lazarus since the Lord had not arrived before he died. How little they understood about the power of the Son of God! But let us not judge them unjustly for are we not also lacking in understanding and weak in faith? And do we not see

sinners around us and sometimes think that there is no hope even in God for such a depraved individual?

Going on in our brief look at the main events in this incident, we come to these words: “**Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go**” (vs. 38-44). In this portion we have a narration of the things that transpired that day. But we are also taught what takes place when a spiritually dead sinner is made alive. Consider the following five things, please.

First of all note that there is no doubt as to this fact: Lazarus was dead. He had been dead so long that his body had begun to decay. There was no life in him. He was hopeless and helpless in himself. Neither could his sisters or other kinsfolk restore him to life. If Christ could not, or would not, raise him from his

stinking dead condition, his body would continue to decay and would remain so until the future resurrection. So it is with those who are spiritually dead. If Christ does not infuse life into them, they will remain spiritually dead! And sinners are dead spiritually. Their spirits – that part of man which when alive can know God – cannot resurrect themselves. Paul wrote of the grace of God which quickens those whom God will save, saying, “**Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)**” (Eph. 2:5). In passing, we point out that this is where the fundamental difference lies between those who believe that God saves sinners by grace and those who believe that sinners do something to cause God to save them. Here is the difference between sovereignists and the varieties of Arminians that plague the world today. If a sinner has a part in his quickening or regeneration Paul would have written, ‘Even when we were almost dead in sins, by an act of our wills in believing, we pleased God and motivated Him to quicken us (by human works and God’s grace together ye are saved.’ But Paul did not write that! And those who are familiar with the Book of Romans know that God made it very clear there that there can be no combination of works and grace in any part of salvation. To attempt to compound works and grace together results in a destruction of the nature of each one. Paul wrote: “**And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work**” (Rom. 11:6). It is impossible to mix works and grace! Each is contrary

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to the other. If the new birth is by obedience (works) it is not of grace! On the other hand since the new birth and all of salvation is by grace, then works/obedience/baptism/man's will, etc., all have nothing to do with it. Being dead, only the power of God could raise Lazarus.

The grave of Lazarus was a cave. A stone covered the opening. So the second thing we call your attention to is this: the Lord Jesus instructed that the stone be removed by human power. The Lord Himself could have spoken and the stone would have been removed. He could have called for angels to remove the stone, but He did neither. Those disciples with Him were able to do that and He told them to do it. What happened when the stone was removed? Nothing. Nothing happened to Lazarus: nothing at all except that light flooded his tomb. And that light did him absolutely no good because he was dead. He was unable to see. He was blind and his face was wrapped about with a cloth. All the light in the world will not help a blind man. What is signified by the removal of the stone on Lazarus' grave? What is the light that must shine upon a spiritually dead sinner before life is infused in him? If we may borrow from Paul, it is **"... the light of the glorious gospel of Christ..."** of course! It is that light which must **"...shine unto them"** if they are to be saved (II Corinthians 4:4). The light of the gospel does not shine into a spiritually dead sinner for he is blind. The humanist/Arminian thinks his preaching of the gospel shines into the lost sinner. It does not! It never enters beyond the mind of the sinner. And that

sinner's **"...mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be"** (Rom. 8:7). Knowing the gospel in the mind does no good! The experience of God's grace in regeneration does not take place in the mind.

The sinner has not the capacity to receive light. And so the gospel must be proclaimed unto spiritually dead, blind, stinking, hopeless, helpless sinners. And that is the first part of the three-fold commission given to the Lord's congregations. Only when Christ regenerates a sinner can the light of the gospel shine into him! Only then can it reach his heart – his innermost being and spring up in that ground made good by the indwelling Spirit of God. Paul makes this clear in II Corinthians 4:6: **"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."** Just as the original creation was a direct act of God, so also is regeneration. And it is regeneration which enables man to receive the light of the gospel. Only a born from above person is able to have a **"knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."**

Third, we notice that Lazarus lies there still. He is dead even though the light has filled the place where he lay. Still he is dead! Only when Christ calls him to come forth does he live! The Lord Jesus, after praying to His Father said, **"Lazarus, come forth."** The call uttered by the Lord Jesus was personal, specific and effectual (effective). The call of Christ did what the light could not do! And the effectual call spoken by Christ does what the gospel cannot do. Christ's words gave life to Lazarus. Somebody objects saying, "But

the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Is that not true?" Our answer is that such a partial quotation is a distortion of the truth. The gospel is not the power of God unto salvation! It is the power of God unto salvation only to those that believe (see Romans 1:16). And there lies Lazarus, dead, unable to do anything. And just so, dead sinners are unable even to "hear" the gospel, let alone believe it. Paul wrote about the inability of lost sinners to hear/receive the Word of God. He wrote: **"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"** (I Cor. 2:14). Not only will a spiritually dead sinner not receive the things revealed by the Spirit – that is the Word of God. He is not able to do so. He cannot know them because he does not have the Spirit. He does not have the equipment, if you please. Dead sinners are unable to believe! Faith is a gift. It does not exist in the natural man. If it did they that are in the flesh could please God. But they cannot according to Romans 8:8. This preacher is always harping on those Scriptures that teach total-hereditary-depravity-inability. This preacher admits that he does that very thing. And why does he attempt to drive that nail again and again? Because that important basic truth is denied or ignored by most professing Christians today. Most people are being fed the lie of human ability and so their confidence – their faith and trust – is not in Christ alone. Instead, their faith is in what they were able to do for themselves. Oh, perhaps they had a little encouragement from God, but they obeyed God and thus pleased Him – they think!

But they think wrong! A rotting corpse, spiritually speaking, has no faith. And so it is that Lazarus remained dead until he was infused with life at the spoken word of the Lord Jesus. Until the Lord called him, he remained as he was. The light had shone all around him, but it did him no good. And so it is with spiritually dead sinners in their spiritual tombs, basking in the light of the gospel without believing that gospel. To them – since they are unbelievers – the gospel is not the power of God.

Many sinners never heed the general call of the gospel. They have sat under gospel preaching and it has done them no good. They need the effectual (effective) call which comes from God. That call produces God's desired effect in them: life! The Lord Jesus said, **"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live"** (John 5:25). He was speaking of living spiritually as a result of dead men hearing. But Jesus did not speak of hearing the gospel. He said that it was the **"voice of the Son of God"** that infuses life into the dead! Only the power of God can make a hearing ear out of a deaf one and a seeing eye out of a blind one. Have you enough understanding to see that God spoke also of spiritual things when He said, **"The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them"** (Pro. 20:12). Why is it that we assume that Christ no longer speaks just because He is in heaven? God spoke in creation. Hebrews 11:3 says, **"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God..."** That word of God was not the Bible! It was the spoken

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word of God. Genesis 1:3 records: **“And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.”** God spoke in the garden and cursed His creation. And God speaks in the effectual call in a manner above our understanding. But when He calls in the person of His Son, **“the dead shall hear.”**

The fourth thing we see is this: instantly upon the spoken call of the Lord Jesus, Lazarus **“came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin.”** Lazarus came forth by no less power than God’s power! He was wrapped similarly to an Egyptian mummy. He could not move about of his own power or ability. Christ’s power brought him out of his tomb. He was alive! Although he could not see because of the napkin, he was a new man – but he was still tied up. The napkin binding his face kept him from seeing and fully understanding what was going on. So it is in regeneration. As some Baptist confessions have it, regeneration, or the spiritual birth, is accomplished “in a manner above our comprehension.” It is accomplished by the Holy Spirit for **“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit”** (John 3:6). Jesus, speaking of the wind as a picture of the work of the Spirit in regeneration said, **“thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit”** (John 3:8). The experience of Lazarus pictures the experience of grace. Without this experience of grace religious people are still lost. Without the experience of grace, professing Christians

are merely empty professors. Without the experience of grace, baptized men and women are just wet lost sinners. Without the experience of grace, folk who try to obey the Bible are just spiritually dead works mongers involved **“...in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body...”** (Col. 2:23). Such may rein in their baser lusts, but remain dead in their sins. Such a religion does nothing to change a person from being in the flesh to the realm of the Spirit. (See Romans 8:8-9).

Finally, the fifth thing to note is that once again the Lord Jesus assigned work to the disciples – His traveling church. There was something else that little bride was to do. Just as He had instructed them to remove the stone from Lazarus’ tomb, so He instructs them to **“Loose him, and let him go.”** Jesus could have spoken and the bindings would have immediately fallen from Lazarus’ body. He could have caused that to happen the moment life came into the body of Lazarus. But He did not. What are we to learn from the command of the Lord to the disciples to unbind Lazarus? What parallel is there between the disciples loosing Lazarus and those things that are to follow a spiritual resurrection? We ask, what is it that makes us free? The Lord Himself said, **“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”** (John 8:32). Lazarus was alive, but needed to be set free. He needed the napkin removed from his face. And so it is that babes in Christ – yea, and all the children of God – need to hear the truth. They need to hear the gospel explained more fully though they had it preached to their deaf ears prior to their new birth. After all, it is Christ **“who hath abolished death, and hath**

brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (II Tim. 1:10). It is the gospel that is the means of bringing these two things to light! God’s children are to be fed with both milk and meat – the truths of God’s Word. Angels were not given this work. Christ does not do this work. It is to the Lord’s congregations that He gave commission to make disciples, baptize them, and teach them to observe all His commands. That is how those raised from spiritual death are loosed from their grave clothes! And those grave clothes are the worldlings’ ignorance, and philosophy, and attitudes – all those ideas that are contrary to the Word of God. Mere evangelistic preaching or witnessing will not remove the graveclothes from the raised sinner, though it may help some. Adding baptism to evangelism will not take the graveclothes off the raised sinner. It takes the whole of the great commission – including teaching obedience to the commands of Christ to do that job. That is why the Lord’s churches need to be involved in the whole work of the gospel ministry – all three parts of the commission.

Surely the order and detail of the raising of Lazarus portrays to us – signifies to us – just how the Spirit of God infuses life into spiritually dead sinners. This incident teaches us that those who have already experienced regeneration have a part to play – work to do – in the salvation of sinners. Christ’s churches are to be busy preaching to dead sinners and baptizing and teaching **“as many as the Lord our God shall call”** (Acts 2:39). And so it is that the Bible will not allow us to be fatalists or “hardshells.” Rather, as faithful members in a congregation of Christ’s, we

are to be actively involved in carrying out the commission left to us by the Lord Himself. Every regenerated man and woman ought to live so as to be qualified to be a member in good standing of one of the Lord’s churches. And every one of the Lord’s churches ought to be involved in making disciples, baptizing them, and teaching them to obey the Word of God. There is a danger here: if we ourselves and the preachers whom we support do not understand how God saves sinners, the message will be unclear. Let us make sure we give forth a clear call upon our gospel trumpets! **“For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?”** (I Cor. 14:8). All of us must be diligent, studious, and careful to make sure we understand the gospel. We must not only understand it, we must give it out clearly, subtracting nothing and adding nothing to it.

A final word to any reader who has not been infused with spiritual life by Christ. You must have such an experience of grace. You cannot earn it. It will do no good to pretend to have it. Only, **“If the Son... shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed”** (John 8:36). Your self satisfaction with your religious works and human goodness are evidence that you have not had the infusion of spiritual life – the experience of grace – by which spiritually dead sinners are made alive. Never forget! Jesus said, **“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again”** (John 3:6-7). Have you been born from above? Your only hope is in Christ!



THE BIBLE AND THE NEWS PAPER

Readers of the BBB are urged to submit religious news items which they may read in their local paper or some other publication. In sending these please give the name of the publication as well as the date it was printed. We will not be able to print all which are submitted, but we welcome any item you may feel we should read.

Send them to The Berea Baptist Banner, PO Box 39, Mantachie, MS 38855-0039.

SEX CLUB CLAIMS TO BE CHURCH

(WNS)--A private sex club in Nashville claimed it was a church to get approval from the city to open. The Social Club planned to relocate from downtown to a more private suburban location—one that backed up to a Christian school. When parents and religious leaders protested, the club changed its name to United Fellowship Center so it could be zoned as a church. City officials said they plan to approve the center, noting they take zoning applicants at their word for what kind of business they will operate. But if sexual activity takes place at the facility, the owners could face repercussions from the city and the state, which has outlawed private sex clubs within 1,000 feet of schools, parks, day cares, and houses of worship.

CALIFORNIA PREGNANCY CENTERS FIGHT LAW FORCING THEM TO GIVE ABORTION INFO

(WNS)--California lawmakers are moving forward with a bill that would require pregnancy care centers to tell clients they can get abortions from state-funded facilities. The Reproductive FACT Act passed out of the Assembly Health Committee in mid-April by an 11-5 vote, despite more than 80 witnesses testifying against it. Assembly Bill 775 would require all medically licensed pregnancy centers in California to inform clients the state offers publicly funded family

planning services, prenatal care, and abortions. The notices would include a phone number clients could call to access those services. The law also would require unlicensed pregnancy centers to provide notices stating they don't have state approval. Failure to comply carries a \$500 fine for the first offense and a \$1,000 fine for subsequent offenses. The bill will next appear before the Assembly Judiciary Committee before heading to the full Assembly for a vote.

TENNESSEE PASSES WAIT PERIOD, LICENSING MANDATE FOR ABORTION CENTERS

(WNS)--The Tennessee House passed pro-life bills April 21 that likely will become the first abortion industry regulations to pass in the state since voters in November modified the state constitution to allow more abortion regulation. The bills include a 48-hour wait period before performing abortions, with an exception for medical emergencies. The Senate already approved the bill, but the House added an amendment that requires final approval from the Senate. The House and Senate also approved a bill requiring abortion facilities to obtain licensing as ambulatory surgical treatment centers if they perform more than 50 abortions a year. All of Tennessee's abortion facilities fall under that requirement. A spokesman for Gov. Bill Haslam said the governor likely will sign both bills.

JOHN GLENN: EVOLUTION

SHOULD BE TAUGHT IN SCHOOLS

Recently reported by the Associated Press, John Glenn (the first American to orbit the Earth and former U.S. senator) declared as a 77-year-old in a news conference from space that "to look out at this kind of creation out here and not believe in God is to me impossible," says facts about scientific discovery should be taught in schools -- and that includes evolution. He also stated that he sees no contradiction between believing in God and believing in evolution. "I don't see that I'm any less religious by the fact that I can appreciate the fact that science just records that we change with evolution and time, and that's a fact," said Glenn, a Presbyterian. "It doesn't mean it's less wondrous and it doesn't mean that there can't be some power greater than any of us that has been behind and is behind whatever is going on."

ARE RELIGIOUS COLLEGES AT RISK IF SUPREME COURT APPROVES SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

A recent Fox News story reported that same-sex marriage foes are flagging a mostly-missed moment from the recent Supreme Court arguments over the constitutionality of gay marriage, calling it a warning sign for religious freedom. They point to an exchange between Justice Samuel Alito and the administration's top lawyer, Solicitor General Donald Verrilli. Alito asked if, in the event the Supreme Court holds that there is a constitutional right to same-sex marriage, would religious colleges risk losing their tax-exempt status if they continued to advocate for traditional marriage only. Verrilli responded, "I don't deny that ... It is going to be an issue." Travis Weber, director of the Family Research Council's Center for Religious Liberty, said he believed Verrilli's logic would eventually

extend to churches and just about "anyone holding a traditional view of marriage." Weber warned that if the current trend continues, those who refuse to endorse same-sex marriage could face "fines, potentially imprisonment."

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS ISIS EXECUTES 35 ETHIOPIAN CHRISTIANS

(WNS)--The Ethiopian government declared three days of mourning after officials confirmed Islamic State militants executed at least 35 Ethiopian Christians held captive in Libya. As with other mass killings, the terrorists on April 19 released a video of the murders. An Ethiopian government spokesman said the slain Christians likely were migrants trying to reach Europe. The grisly video bore the grim trademark of Islamic State (ISIS) footage in February that showed the beheadings of 21 Egyptian Christians on a Libyan beach. The Egyptian government ordered airstrikes against Islamic State targets in response.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM PANEL: TERROR, VIOLENCE SPREADING WORLDWIDE

(WNS)--The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) urged the Obama administration to increase public pressure on foreign governments "perpetrating or tolerating" severe persecution of religious minorities around the world. "Humanitarian crises fueled by waves of terror, intimidation, and violence have engulfed an alarming number of countries in the year since the release of [USCIRF's] prior annual report last May," the report says. "The horrors of the past year speak volumes about how and why religious freedom and the protection of the rights of vulnerable religious communities matter." The

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Bible & the Newspaper

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report, which spans January 2014 to January 2015, is USCIRF's 16th since Congress created the commission in 1998 to provide independent recommendations to the president, secretary of state, and Congress. True to form, USCIRF called on the State Department to dramatically increase its list of "countries of particularly concern," or CPCs, from the current nine to 17.



The Short Pews



Brief
Articles
by Curtis
Pugh

IS IT POSSIBLE TO PLEASE GOD?

The results of everyday conversation with people seems to indicate that most people think they have the ability to please God. But the questions for Bible believers are these: does the Bible teach that pleasing God is a possibility? Do all individuals have this ability? What are the requirements for pleasing God? For our answers we must not rely on what men think – or even what churches teach. **“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them”** (Isa. 8:20). That verse means that regardless of who says what, if their speech does not agree with the whole Word of God, they have no light (truth, understanding) in them. Surely everyone will agree that all the different teachings of all the different churches cannot be right. Churches cannot even agree on how God saves sinners! Some

say through praying. Others say through baptism. Others through sincerity. But back to the question: **“Is It Possible To Please God?”**

There is a very clear statement found in Romans 8:7-9 which says: **“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”** Paul was writing to the congregation in Rome. In no uncertain terms he said that those people who are still in the flesh (natural born condition) cannot please God. So, we must agree with the Bible: lost men and women cannot please God. That is an absolute statement. There is absolutely nothing that lost people can do to please God. Their works, prayers, sincerity, religious observances, obedience to the Bible, - you name it – it does not please God. People who are yet in the state in which they were naturally born cannot please God!

The text last quoted also speaks in clear and certain terms. Paul wrote to the church membership in Rome telling them that they were not in the flesh (natural born condition) but in the Spirit if the Spirit of God indwelt them. The key word there is “if.” The question is does the Holy Spirit – also called the Spirit of Christ – dwell in you. If He does not, you are yet in your sins. You are yet in the natural condition into which you were naturally born. And in that condition you cannot please God. But if God in all His sovereignty has moved into you in such a way as to make you His child – a believer in Christ – you are in the Spirit. Only those in this born again condition – being indwelt by the Spirit – have the ability and

the possibility of pleasing God. In which condition are you?

THE SPIRIT MUST WORK FIRST

Does a sinner initiate his own new birth or must God work first? In John 3:3 the Lord Jesus said, **“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”** Again the Lord said, **“Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again”** (John 3:7). The King James Bible translators put a note saying: “again: or, from above” in the margin at both verses. The most frequent translation of the Greek word translated “again” is actually translated “from above.” This shows without a doubt that the spiritual birth, sometimes called regeneration, is something God does. It comes from above.

The Lord made this clear when He said **“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit”** (John 3:6). In spite of this, there is a popular idea that if a sinner will pray or make a decision or make a public profession of faith or be baptized, God will reward him with spiritual life. This cannot be the case because the Bible says, **“So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his”** (Rom. 8:8-9). Since a spiritually dead sinner – a person **“in the flesh”** - cannot please God there is no way any action on his part will cause God to look favorably upon him. After all, what is it that sinners have that God wants or needs? What is it that they have to enable them to strike a bargain with God?

These last-quoted two verses show that only after the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in an individual is

that person no longer in the flesh. Such a person is no longer in the flesh, but in the Spirit, and so has spiritual life. Those in the flesh **“cannot please God”** but they are contrasted with those **“in the Spirit.”** Notice the conjunction **“but”** which contrasts those **“in the flesh”** with those **“in the spirit.”** Those in **“in the flesh cannot please God, But,”** those who are indwelt by the Spirit of God are different from those in the flesh. The plain meaning is that those **“in the Spirit”** can please God. They have been made alive by the Spirit of God. **“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive”** means that since all men were born **“in Adam”** they are spiritually dead – but those **“in Christ”** shall be born from above or regenerated, (I Cor. 15:22). The all important question, then, is this: are you **“in Christ”** or are you not? You must be **“in Christ”** in order to be made alive. Have you been made alive spiritually? Are you yet **“in the flesh”** or has the Holy Spirit of God come into you? Has He by His presence made you alive to God?

A LOOK IN THE MIRROR

Whenever we take an honest look at the Word of God we see ourselves as we are. Often men do not like what they see about themselves. Consider some things people do not like to hear from the Bible. The Bible says: **“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags...”** (Isa. 64:6). Literally what Isaiah said is that all the things we think are good about ourselves are like menstros cloths, fit only to be destroyed. The best any man can do is not good enough.

Paul wrote: **“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing...”** (Rom. 7:18). These two Bible statements prove

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Short Pews

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that man as he is naturally born is depraved in every part. His motives are impure. His thoughts are evil. His nature is pleasure-seeking. His will is impaired. His mind is enmity against God. In spite of what we call human good, there is nothing really good in any son of Adam. There is nothing in the natural man to commend him to God. And the natural man likes it that way. In fact, Paul wrote about such men as they come from their mother's womb, saying that, **"...there is none that seeketh after God"** (Rom. 3:11). Men may seek after the comfort of religion or seek escape from eternal punishment, but they do not of themselves seek after God. To say that they do is to contradict the Bible. It is to refuse to honestly look in the mirror of God's Word.

Man's fallen condition is so helpless that God's Word says: **"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God"** (Rom. 8:7-8). See that! Men and women in their natural born state "cannot please God!" The natural mind cannot be subject to God! What an awful deformity every child of Adam possesses! Neither his praying, his obedience, his religion, his penance, his turning over a new leaf, nor any other action on man's part will please God. Whether joining a church, submitting to baptism, giving money, taking the Lord's Supper or doing any other thing: absolutely nothing that a natural man can do will please God. No action of man will have any effect upon God. That is why Jesus said, **"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where**

it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:7-8). The Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowal of eternal life. You cannot make a deal with Him, nor can He be bribed! Any religion that tells you that salvation is based in part or in whole on works of obedience is false. **"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again"** (John 3:7).

RELIGION OR CHRIST

By nature man is a pleasure seeking animal. He was created in the image of God, but that image has been so marred by sin that men are now totally depraved. Adam fell by disobedience to a simple command. His descendants, unless God intervenes in their lives, spend their money, time, and energy in pleasure. Many people, uneasy about their eternal destiny, find pleasure in religion. This is true worldwide. All of the world's religions have one thing in common except Biblical Christianity. The one thing that all the world's religions have in common – including a great many that pretend to be Christianity – is this: they all believe that they will be saved by their works. Some may think to please their god and be saved by making a pilgrimage to a supposedly holy place. Others by bathing in some river. Others by being baptized, supposing that obedience produces eternal life. Only Biblical Christianity says what the Bible says: **"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast"** (Eph. 2:8-9). Plain words these and easily understood, but seldom believed.

The Bible is quite specific. Speaking of Christ, Peter said,

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). But he did not mean mere religion in the name of Christ was sufficient to bring salvation. In fact Jesus spoke of very zealous religious folk who in spite of their religion – or rather because of it – would be lost. Christ's words are found in Matthew 7:21-23 as follows: **"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."** Prophesying, casting out devils, performing many miracles – and all in Christ's name – religious folk think all these kinds of things indicate their acceptability. But Christ said they meant nothing because He did not know them. They claimed to know Him, but that claim did not matter.

What matters is this: does Christ know you? Religion talks about accepting Christ. The Bible talks about people being made acceptable in the beloved – in the Beloved Son of God. Paul, in Ephesians 1:6 wrote about himself and other genuinely saved people saying that God **"hath made us accepted in the beloved."** Mere religion will not do! Only by being made accepted in Christ is there salvation. Being made accepted is a work of God, not of man or his religious deeds and efforts. **"Ye must be born again"** (John 3:7).



BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST Financial Report 4-1-2015 to 4-30-2015

Beginning Balance	\$7,847.23
RECEIPTS:	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	225.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	100.00
Calvary Ind. B. C., Everson, WA	100.00
.....	425.00
TOTAL	8,272.23
EXPENDITURES:	
Radio Time	454.98
Program production	195.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	649.98
.....	7,622.25
Interest	+06
ENDING BALANCE	\$7,622.31



BEREA BAPTIST BANNER Financial Report 4-1-2015 to 4-30-2015

Beginning Balance	\$2,002.04
RECEIPTS:	
Amazing Grace B. C., Stockdale, TX	50.00
B. C. of Brimfield, Brimfield, IL	25.00
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	300.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL	60.00
Bethel B. C., Pasadena, TX	100.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	150.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne, WV	313.45
Carol Willet, Edgewater, FL	100.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL	25.00
Davenport B. C., Davenport, WA	160.00
Emmanuel M. B. C., Oldtown, KY	100.00
Faith B. C. Lynn, AR	12.50
Gail Knowles, Scarborough, ME	20.00
Gary Fields, Dublin, GA	25.00
Grace B. C., Winston-Salem, NC	50.00
Grace M. B. C., Marion, IL	50.00
Grace M. B. C., Tulsa, OK	35.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV	100.00
James Bradshaw, Fiatt, IL	26.00
The Lord's Church, Goose Creek, SC	50.00
Michael Sherman, Ashland, KY	30.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH	100.00
New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN	50.00
Parkway L. B. C., Springfield, OR	200.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL	100.00
Southside B. C., Fulton, MS	25.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Burghill, OH	75.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Northport, AL	100.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Silsbee, TX	30.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA	25.00
Subscriptions	128.00
Anonymous	1,210.00
Dividing checks	150.00
Sub Total	\$3,974.95
TOTAL	\$5,976.99
EXPENDITURES:	
Printing	490.00
Postage	677.85
Supplies	257.01
Wages	2,300.00
FICA	175.90
Dividing checks	150.00
Total Expenditures	\$4,050.76
.....	1,926.23
Bank Charge	-13.00
ENDING BALANCE	\$1,913.23

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Indore Baptist Church of Indore, WV and pastor Paul Stepp would like to announce their Bible Conference from June 25th through June 28th.

Service times are 7:00 p.m. on Thursday and Friday, 9:30 a.m. on Saturday and 10:00 a.m. on Sunday.

Scheduled speakers are Elders Hank Bailess, Jonathan Bailess, Benjamin Stepp, Matthew Stepp, Jeff Short, Tom Ross, John Pruitt, Andy Proctor, and Leroy Pack.

All are welcome to attend.

The Grace Bible Baptist Church in Denham Springs, LA will be hosting its 19th annual Bible Conference on June 5-7, 2015.

Scheduled speakers are Bro. Larry Wilson, Pastor of Northside B.C., in Oakdale, LA; Bro. David O'Neal, Pastor of Grace Missionary B.C., in Tulsa, OK; Bro. Lucien Lesage, of Pride, LA; Bro. Joey Newell, of Denham Springs, LA; and Bro. Jerry Dodson, Pastor of Grace Bible B.C., in Denham Springs, LA.

Services will begin at 6:30 p.m. on Friday the 5th, 10:30 a.m. on Saturday morning, 4:30 p.m. on Saturday evening and 9:45 a.m. on Sunday Morning.

A light meal will be served at the church fellowship hall at 5:00 p.m. on Friday, a noon meal at 12:10 p.m. on Saturday and the evening meal at 6:10 p.m., on Saturday, followed by a noon meal at 12:00 p.m. on Sunday.

Everyone is invited to attend this conference. Call Bro Jerry at (225) 664-3223 if you have any questions. Be sure and leave a message on the church answering machine should you get no answer

and we will get back with you as soon as possible.

The Philadelphia Baptist Church of Decatur, AL would like to announce their Summer Meeting for June 17th - 21st. Service times are Wednesday thru Friday at 7:00 p.m., Saturday 10:00 a.m., and Sunday 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.

The primary speaker will be Elder William VanNunen. Elder Shaun Trescott will be the additional speaker on Saturday which is the Quarterly Fellowship. A noon meal will be provided Saturday.

The Berea Baptist Broadcast can now be heard on WQRL 106.3 FM in the southern Illinois area at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings. The program is being sponsored by the Grace Missionary Baptist Church, 306 North Vicksburg St, Marion, IL 22959. If you enjoy the program let them know by calling them at (618) 841-0228.

A new mission work has begun. The Providence Baptist Church located at 1115 Jones Mill Road, Cartersville, GA 30120, is an outreach of the Tibet Baptist Church of Ludowici, GA. Service times are Sunday School at 9:45 a.m., Morning Worship at 10:45 a.m. and Evening Worship at 5:00 p.m.

For more information please contact Bro. Bruce Allen (502) 468-6563, Email: providencebc30120@gmail.com or on Facebook under Providence Baptist.

The Windsor Baptist Church of Windsor, IL is seeking a qualified candidate for pastor. They are small in number but rich in truth. Candidate should meet the qualification in I Timothy 3. For more information please contact Brother John Gregory at (217)728-9966 or Email windsorbaptist.grace@gmail.com.

The Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Galena, OH is in need of a pastor. Any interested candidates possessing the qualifications and traits concerning the office as found in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 are asked to contact either of the following: Bro. Randy Coffey at (614) 871-2406 or email recoffeypot@aol.com, or Bro. Joe Vass at (614) 846-8699 or email jamijoe@wowway.com.

The Faith Missionary Baptist Church of Cobbitty, South Wales, Australia is in need of a pastor. For more information please contact David Jackson at 4 Station Street, Thirlmere, NSW 2572, Australia or Email:

shellie45@bigpond.com.au.

The Victory Baptist Church of Chehalis, Washington is in need of a pastor. Any interested brother may call Gerry Greisen at (360) 985-7975, or Mark Fenison at (360) 751-2929.

The Grace Missionary Baptist Church of Marion, IL is in need of a replacement pastor. Elder Raymond T. Ellis is the current pastor, but due to his age, is needing to resign. The church believes and preaches the doctrines of grace and the local church. Any interested Elder may contact Elder Ellis at (618) 983-8697 or Bro. Gary Ratley at (618) 841-0228.

The Twinbrook Hills Baptist Church of Hamilton, OH is prayerfully seeking a pastor. Organized in 1938, the church holds to historic Baptist truths, including the Doctrines of Grace. Please visit the church's website at <http://twinbrook.net> to view the Church Constitution and other items that describe our beliefs and show what the church is doing today. Please contact Bro. Chris Willis at Elohimfirst@gmail.com for more information.

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