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"Put on the whole armor of God"

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Sabbath Observance: A Forgotten Behavior

On occasion questions come up about the Sabbath, expressing the struggles we sometimes face with understanding just what is expected from us when the sun sets on Friday. Some of us may feel occasional guilt because we think we're not centered enough on "spiritual things" during this 24-hour period. What should our approach be and what is really expected of us during the Sabbath?

by Bill Watson



Bill Watson

IT ISN'T UNCOMMON TO FEEL, OR THINK the way we are observing the Sabbath isn't exactly right. There may be times when our behavior—a particular activity—just doesn't feel right during this "sanctified" (set apart) time. We feel that perhaps we shouldn't be where we're at, or doing what we're doing. Have you ever thought or felt that way when the Sabbath arrived? Well, if you have, I can assure you, you're not alone.

Over the years there have been efforts—whether in sermons, articles, books, group pressure, or church policy—that have tried to mandate certain "do's and don'ts" for keeping the Sabbath, but that's hardly the solution to this relentless and sometimes puzzling question. Attempting to *legislate righteous behavior* is not the right approach for Christians or for church organizations. Jesus Himself mentioned this very clearly to the Pharisees when He said, "For they [the Pharisees] bind heavy burdens [rules, regulations] and grievous to be borne and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers" (Matthew 23:4).

This really troubled our Savior in so many ways—especially with regard to the oral laws—Talmudic Law. These laws and regulations were never a part of God's requirements for Sabbath observance—yet the people of Israel were expected to *obey them to the letter*. Unfortunately, much of this was due to the rise of the sect of the Pharisees. This movement, originally a small Jewish group—calling themselves separatists, which is what Pharisee means—grew into a dominant pious sect during the Second Temple period. Having become a highly respected influential religious group, its members enforced specific *traditional oral laws* on the people, laws that were not included among the commandments, statutes, and judgments of biblical law. The truth is, in so many instances it was this approach of *legislating the oral traditions* that disturbed Jesus, causing Him so much conflict with these religious leaders.

Consequently, many people have the wrong notion about Sabbath-keeping—they call it legalism, *when it's nothing of the sort!* Contrary to many people's opinion about Sabbath-keeping, it is plainly stated, "The Sabbath was made for

man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). What this simply means is, Sabbath observance should serve the needs of the people doing the observing—not the people *servicing the demands of the Sabbath*, which are often characterized as *burdens too hard to bear*.

Conversely, *Sabbath-keeping should be a blessing* for those who participate in it, because once you begin to understand its proper meaning and purpose you will begin to realize *it should provide both physical and spiritual benefits, which should result in blessings for your life*.

How Can We Maximize Personal Benefits from Sabbath-keeping?

As with most things in life, benefits are derived usually from the *attitude* we choose to approach something with—the better the *attitude*, generally speaking, the greater the benefit—and as well, the better the performance! Unfortunately, for the Pharisees, they viewed the Sabbath from a *very different attitude*. For them, it became a time of judgment, measurement, regulation, limitation, piety, and comparisons. It was a *very burdensome time* of the week for those Jews in the early first century—and the Pharisees *underscored it with multiple oral mandates!*

The Oral Law—the Talmud/Mishnah—had grown into multiple categories divided into a variety of sub-categories with associated levels of varying degrees of particularly defined limitations that, if violated, were considered sins—transgressions of the law!

There were sewing, binding, plowing, baking, writing, and farming limitations—even how far you could travel was regulated and categorized as a "Sabbath Day's Journey"—and that's just one rule concerning the Sabbath. There were all kinds of rules with regard to the Sabbath. For instance, there were rules preventing women from wearing laces or straps on the Sabbath. You were not allowed to free your animal from a ditch or mud pit on the Sabbath, unless the situation met certain criteria. A tailor you couldn't carry a needle and a scribe couldn't carry a pen on the Sabbath. The level of *do's and don'ts* became preposterous and just absolutely ridiculous. Jesus was beyond His wits with all of this incongruous legislation. It became an obvious attempt to *turn the Sabbath into a ritualistic pious legal routine*.

Mark illustrates this very poignantly when reporting the incident that occurred

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The Mystery of Human Sexuality

It's all in the genes. No, it's a lifestyle choice. Who's right?

by James McBride



James McBride

HOW WE LIVE OUT OUR SEXUAL LIVES increasingly preoccupies not just the media but also the armed forces, governments—and even the church. Once upon a time an individual's sex style was personal. And if "aberrant," was swept into the closet.

Not any more. A debate now [2003] rages within the worldwide Anglican communion as to whether it is appropriate to appoint homosexual priests to the office of Bishop. A homosexual priest was recently approved for Bishop in New Hampshire. The Australian Uniting Church have voted to permit the ordination of practicing homosexuals.

We humans are intensely sexual—our survival depends on it! Whatever comparative statistical analysis may say about "then and now," sex and all its beauty and all its abuse is now paraded in bold headlines.

Sexual Decay

A century ago statistics on marriage and divorce were not headline news. Or the level of sexually transmitted disease. Or the number of child abductions, cases of child abuse, rape, pornography. Such are now flaunted as if sex were a new discovery. Television is barely watchable, eyes are averted at the newsstands, certain newspapers avoided—at least by so-called "moral prudes." And hopefully by those who wish to follow the precepts of Jesus Christ.

The openness, however, certainly hasn't stemmed the tide of what used to be termed immorality and its sickening consequences. Britain, according to a Parliamentary Committee, is in the middle of a "sexual health crisis." Rates of gonorrhea and Chlamydia have doubled in six years, syphilis has soared almost 500 percent. Over a million are being treated by sexual disease clinics. "Sex" pervades our culture. What was once "evil" is now "good," and "darkness" has become "light"—just as the Old Testament prophets predicted (Isaiah 5:20).

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one Sabbath in a synagogue Jesus was attending. Notice what happened. “And He [Jesus] entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. And they [the Pharisees] watched him, *whether He [Jesus] would heal him on the Sabbath day*; that they might accuse Him [the Pharisees had an agenda]. And He [Jesus] said unto them [the audience, including the Pharisees], Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? To save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. [Notice Jesus’ reaction to their silence and probably their body language.] And when He had looked round about on them [while observing, He was affected] with anger [Greek: *or'-gay*: violent passion, abhorrence, indignation, or distress and wrath], being grieved [Greek: *sool-loop-eh'-o*: passive sorrow on the account of] for the hardness [blindness] of their hearts, He said unto the man, Stretch forth your hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other. And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him” (Mark 3:1–6).

The Pharisees were so preoccupied with obedience to their *man-made traditional rules and laws* they actually forgot the “contextual purpose” of how the Sabbath should provide *time to serve the needs of man*. Read Matthew’s description of Jesus’ observation regarding this point. It’s quite profound (Matthew 15:1–20).

Clearly, the Bible plainly states that works of the law (especially the Oral Law) cannot justify a man; only the faith of Jesus Christ can justify and save man (Galatians 2:16). *The Law of the Torah* (first five books of the Old Testament) was only intended to reveal the knowledge of sin—to *define* it—so we would know right from wrong as *God sees it* (Romans 3:20). However, that doesn’t dismiss the fact that God expects us to behave—to work at our salvation and *become righteous in our actions* as He is righteous (Philippians 3:12–16); but those works, or behaviors, cannot save us (James 2:14–26). **It is important to understand**, “For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus [however, *take note of this instruction*] **unto good works**, which God has before ordained [prepared] that we should **walk in them**” (Ephesians 2:8–10). Undoubtedly, we are expected to walk the talk—so, the question remains: *just how legalistic should we be regarding our Sabbath observance?*

In the book of Luke, another illustration reveals just how out of hand and absurdly ridiculous these **works** of the *traditional oral laws* had become. In a synagogue again, Jesus notices a woman who has a spirit of infirmity causing her to bow for eighteen years. Out of compassion, He calls unto her, “Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity.” Immediately, she stood up, completely healed, and gave God praise! The rabbi *became indignant* over this *act of merciful healing* and essentially told Jesus there are six days to work, and the Sabbath was not one of them! In other words, in his mind, Jesus was breaking the regulation of the Sabbath and this act of healing was considered work! This is *seriously outrageous*—the insensitivity and disassociation this rabbi had from the *real purpose of the Sabbath* is simply stunning! However, Jesus calls him—and rightly so—a hypocrite, and then explains to him a lesson, contrasting their actions with a principle of the Torah (not the Talmud/Mishnah), which caused all of them to be ashamed (Luke 13:10–17).

Clearly, we are being told it’s all right to do well on the Sabbath—that the Sabbath *should be reserved for restoration, service, and acts of kindness*. A variety of other examples show Jesus doing many things on the Sabbath—He ate, traveled, healed, preached, fellowshiped, and attended religious services. The Bible is filled with many illustrations of a wide range of behaviors that were done on the Sabbath day. But again, this question, too, begs an answer: *just how much liberty can we take—how much is too much?*

Laying Down Some Boundaries for Sabbath Observance

Certainly, we don’t want to approach the Sabbath with the attitude that it’s ceremonial or just pious routine, as if we were enslaved to a ritual of legalistic behaviors. On the contrary, since the Sabbath was created for man, not man for the Sabbath, we should decidedly recognize it ought to be *a helper of our joy*. We, along with our families should look forward to it with a *positive attitude, with anticipation!* After all, it is listed along with the feast days in Leviticus 23, showing the weekly Sabbath is *also a holy feast day—it’s a special day of the week and should be treated as such*.

With that in mind, it does us well to consider a few things Jesus says about the Sabbath in *light of these two previous questions*: (1) Just how legalistic should we be regarding our Sabbath observance? (2) How much liberty on the Sabbath is too much?

These questions go to the heart of the matter with regard to our *attitude toward the Sabbath*—and our Lord was very “attitude oriented.” *The attitude we have toward anything is a manifestation of intent*—and our Lord was **extremely focused on intent**. If you read Matthew 15:15–20, you will see the moral of that story was *all about intent and attitude*. The lesson was not about the way you washed your hands as described in the Talmud, Mishnah, or the Torah, but rather what comes out of your heart (verse 18). His attempt to contrast the hand-washing ritual with the Fifth Commandment was to illustrate how they were *straining at gnats—majoring in the minors!* It was unacceptable as far as He was con-

cerned. He recognized they were obsessing so much about minor items (in their traditions), they were missing the larger lessons of what God’s Torah, the actual Law, was teaching. Basically, He was explaining to them (the Pharisees) that, by doing this, they were allowing themselves to be blinded by their own *man-made traditions* (Matthew 15:8–14) and missing the real benefits of what God’s law intended to provide.

This is illustrated again in Matthew 5:17–30. Here again Jesus uses a few examples to explain that what is in the mind—the intent—is *what defines the attitude* toward the object of interest. He uses hate (as an *attitude of murder*) and sexual lust (as an *unhealthy attitude toward sex*), two primary examples illustrating how thought—or intent—can contribute to the *wrong attitude*, which *could lead to the wrong action* toward the targeted object; and that results in actually breaking the Law of God—the Commandments—on the *level of the spirit of the Law*. In Matthew 23, Jesus redresses many of these points of hypocrisy the Pharisees had and, time after time, shows how they missed so many of the *main lessons* due to their *obsessive attention* on their *self-centered traditions*. Notice how this particular scripture says it all: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: *these ought you to have done*, and not to leave the other undone” (Matthew 23:23). In other words, you should *do the works of the law, but with a different attitude!*

So, *attitude matters* as does the *behaviors required*. Doing well, but with a bad attitude, has no value. So if you’re going to do well, be sure you do it with the *right intent*, and *your attitude will take care of itself*. This is why it’s so important to do well and obey the works you know to be within God’s will, even if you’re emotionally disturbed or not feeling right. Give yourself time. If your intent is right, your attitude will catch up at some point. Be patience. Remember, attitude is nothing more than the *complexity of your mental state* involving your mental beliefs and emotional disposition—*your intents—which translates into a frame of mind*. At the basis of proper Sabbath observance is a healthy attitude (frame of mind) toward this *mandated expectation* of God’s will—that’s what underscores successful Sabbath-keeping. If you don’t have a positive, healthy *attitude* (frame of mind) toward Sabbath observance, it will be perceived as a burden to you. And, unfortunately, society has a way of compounding this against us by *undermining* our **outlook** toward it and at every opportunity, “*spinning*” Sabbath observance *negatively with conflict, often challenging the boundaries of our Sabbath-keeping with temptations to break or abandon it*.

Some of the most clearly defined *fundamental boundaries* of healthy Sabbath observance are found in Mark 2:23–28. Here Christ establishes a few foundational points the Sabbath should accomplish for us. As you read these scriptures what comes plainly into focus is the *Sabbath should be a blessing* and should serve to *enhance your relationship* with both **God** and your **fellow man**. Christ asserts He is the Lord of the Sabbath, and human needs can potentially super-

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sede even the strictest of religious rules and regulations. *Man's restoration and human need* are of prime importance. *God's will is for man*, not against him.

Notice what the Church of God International's *Systematic Theology Project* (STP) says in the "Sabbath" section, pages 23–24: "Therefore, when Jesus was called into account for doing certain things on the Sabbath, it was not for violating specified Old Testament prohibitions, but for disavowal of non-inspired, traditional regulations [of the Oral Law] concerning the Sabbath. The Old Testament *did not forbid* one to pick ears of grain on the Sabbath to eat on the spot. Yet when Jesus and His disciples did this He was called to account. The reason? Because the religious leaders had classified picking ears as 'reaping' and rubbing loose the grain as 'threshing.'... They were accused only of Sabbath-breaking. ... It was only after He had shown that the actions of the disciples were not a true violation of the Sabbath that He asserted, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: therefore the son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath' (Mark 2:27–28). By this means He showed not that the Sabbath was done away but rather the correct spirit [attitude] in which to keep the Sabbath. Jesus was clearly a Sabbath-keeper, not a Sabbath-breaker."

Our Lord wanted to get us *back to the original intents of the Torah—back to a balance* that was lost, due to the *man-made oral traditions* that became so prominent among the first-century Jewish community. Notice again, specifically, what Jesus says about the man He healed with the withered hand: "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? To save [heal, preserve, make whole, deliver, protect] life, or to kill [destroy]?" (Mark 3:4). Obviously, the answer to these questions—with the intent/attitude (frame of mind) of the Sabbath being a blessing and how it should serve human needs to restore, enhance, and enrich our relationships with both God and man—is clearly to "do good" and to "save life." These are the preferred action if we want to do God's will within the framework, or *boundary*, of the Sabbath. This is at the heart of Sabbath observance: worship God in holy convocation, fulfill human needs, and serve the necessity of restoration where needed. But, admittedly, this can take on many forms.

Some of the **questions we should ask ourselves** in the grand scheme of things *during our Sabbath-keeping* in order to define our boundaries include the following: Will this activity violate the spirit and intent of the Sabbath? Can I do this with a clear conscience? Will it serve to edify, restore, refresh, recharge, infuse, enrich, or in some way enhance my relationships with God, family, and fellow man? Or will it serve to distract, bog me down, prevent, or rob and misdirect my time that would be better spent? What will be the result by spending time and energy on "this" during the Sabbath, compared to what I know is the objective of what the Sabbath should do for me? And we *need to be brutally honest* with ourselves—remember: *intent and attitude is critical—why are you really doing this or going there on the Sabbath?*

Notice again what the STP has to say to this point: "The most important New Testament statement on the Sabbath was spoken by Jesus Christ as quoted in Mark 2:27–28. Jesus not only affirms the Sabbath command, He also instructs us about its purpose. 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.' Thus, it is apparent the Sabbath was made for man, *for his spiritual and physical benefit*. It provides the means for loving God to a greater degree by direct worship and, indirectly, by the spiritual renewal, which enables one to keep up a constant direction of mind [attitude] toward godly matters throughout the week. It is in our earnest attempt to express loyalty and love toward our Creator and to worship Him in spirit and in truth that we, as Christians, continue to keep the seventh-day Sabbath" (STP, "Sabbath" section, page 20). This is a major underlying purpose we should keep in mind about the Sabbath as we make our choices to do the things we do on any given Sabbath Day—worship is central!

The Conclusion Concerning Sabbath-keeping Considerations

We could bring up all kinds of do's and don'ts about what we can or can't do on the Sabbath, and there would likely be points about which Sabbath-keepers would disagree. These would include things like cutting the grass, washing the

car or buying gas, going shopping, paying the paperboy, watching only the news but not a movie on TV, going to a sports event or a play, cooking, eating out at a restaurant, attending a party, sleeping in, skipping church, or perhaps even going to work—but at the end of the day, what we choose to do **will define** our relationships with God, family, or people both in and out of the church. How we *invest our time and energy* to serve the underpinning purpose of the Sabbath's benefits will eventually provide the manifested improvement in our development as Christians—or **the lack thereof as well**. We aren't fooling anyone! If what's *behind our attitude is the intent* to "game God" about keeping the Sabbath—unquestionably, you can count on this fact: **God will not be amused at your excuses!** On the other hand, nor will He be pleased if you do all you can to meet the requirements of Sabbath observance, to the letter of the law as you see and believe it to be, but your attitude is self-righteous, or for show, and your frame of mind is selfishly driven, judging others who don't size up to *your standard*—that too is worthless. God is looking for us to achieve in our lives an *attitude of wanting to observe the Sabbath*, in faith, because we *have come to appreciate and understand its value* to our relationships with God, our families, His people, and our fellow man outside the church.

In the story of the blind man, Jesus was again accused of breaking the Sabbath because He made clay to put on the man's eyes. The problem: it was the Sabbath and the Pharisees claimed Jesus was working—making mortar (John 9:1–16). It's incredible how insensitive—how amazingly heartless!—these religious leaders were! But, again, it goes to illustrate how we all can obsess over the smallest things, which then blind us to the larger picture of the issue at hand—Sabbath keeping in this case being our issue; but by extension, so many other things too.

The Sabbath should always serve our needs as we work within *God's mandated framework*—its defined boundaries. Upon conceding to its requirements, it should be a blessing—*it is not an end of itself; don't make it an idol*—but rather a means, a tool, a vehicle, for us to benefit from as we navigate through life attempting to achieve a quality Christian lifestyle, knowing our life's circumstances will often affect our efforts. Admittedly, a married couple may do things differently than a single person. Marital status and whether there are children affect what may be decided on for the Sabbath. How old we are, our gender, or our health may be factors on what behaviors we engage in or decisions we make on the Sabbath. All of our life's circumstances and conditions have impact on what we choose to do, or allow. But the intent of the law was to encourage us to willingly and gratefully choose to observe the Sabbath, recognizing its value and benefits. This should motivate us to prudently and carefully *work subjectively within the defined framework* of worship of God and service to other people.

But, if we insist on using the Sabbath on *our terms*, outside of *God's defined boundaries and purpose*, it will only serve to stunt our development, limit, and impinge our Christian lifestyle so as not to maximize our relationships, or gifts. The Sabbath is ours to be the beneficiaries of this additional time in our lives for building and developing a relationship with God, family, His people, and our fellow man for the purpose of being better prepared for our leadership roles in His Kingdom.

It's our choice. The Sabbath is for our use, our edification, our refreshment, enrichment, and enhancement. The Sabbath is for doing the Lord's work—works of charity, works of goodness, restoration, worship, education, and development. The Sabbath is of tremendous benefit to our attitude "*if*" we have the *right intent* about *how to use this holy time*. If our *intent* is in line with God's purpose and His will, our behavior will take care of itself, as we grow more familiar with the profile and expectations of the Sabbath time.

So keep in mind *your intent*, because it will *affect your attitude*, which undergirds your frame of mind—*your approach toward Sabbath-observing*. How you approach your Sabbath-keeping makes all the difference to the benefit you will receive as it becomes more indispensable in your life. Sabbath-keeping is an important component because *it manifests the degree of which you personally have conceded to God's rulership in your life and your acknowledgement of Him as Creator of all things*. It's no wonder why we are told: "There remains therefore a rest [a keeping of a Sabbath] to the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9).

SEXUALITY, continued from page 1

Because of the abuse of human sexuality, sexually transmitted disease is almost epidemic, resulting in snowballing widespread infertility. (Health professionals firmly link much infertility with promiscuity—especially in the teen years.) AIDS is destroying millions worldwide, as is the vile practice of abortion. Immature kids ignore or don't realize that sex leads to unwanted pregnancy with consequent burdens on themselves, families, and society. And, encouraged by government and the media, the building block of a stable society, marriage, is in the process of decay.

Sexual faithfulness excludes much heartbreak. Infertility often results from "sleeping around," especially among children—one in seven underage girls are infected with Chlamydia ("the silent disease"). A new case every ten minutes! Disregard of this divine principle has serious consequences. Yet government agencies actively promote teen "sexperimentation."

Yet "alternative lifestyles" are promoted as of equal value. The British Government has recently put forward a consultation paper proposing homosex-

ual and lesbian liaisons should receive the full package of benefits available to married couples.

Age-old Problem

Undoubtedly sexual dysfunction has plagued mankind since we were evicted from Paradise. There always was violent rape, infants were incinerated (not in a hospital as today, but inside an idol as a burnt offering), adultery, fornication, homosexuality. It was all there.

But it was Eden that the guidelines for human sexuality were first set before mankind. But you Creator. And perfectly tailored to the beings He had just created to perfection. Any deviation from the divine guidelines for human sexuality will inevitably end in tears! We function best when we stick to those ground rules. Imagine a world where infidelity is unknown: no adultery or "shacking up" or promiscuity. And no foul sexual disease, no divorce (or need for divorce lawyers), no pornography, no pedophiles.

Continued next page

Principles of Life

In respect of our sexuality God revealed vital principles, based on a single male-female partnership committed for life.

A man and a woman are to stay in partnership for life. Think of the grief avoided by his act of mutual self-discipline. Properly tended, a marriage can last until death, and can be joyous. But the widespread notion that marriage is just a temporary convenience leads to easy divorce with consequent "serial marriage."

In homosexual relationships, however, "monogamy" is rare. While a few such long-term partnerships exist, yet over 40 percent of homosexual men have as many as five hundred partners during their (shortened) lifespan. Most such liaisons don't last longer than two years.

Covenant-bound couples were created to produce offspring. God issued the self-limiting instruction: "*Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth.*" The trauma and expense endured by naturally infertile married couples witness to this human desire to procreate. (Jesus recognized, of course, that some few individuals would correctly choose to remain single and celibate.) Same-sex liaisons, no matter how loving or long-lasting, frustrate this divine instruction. If homosexuality were universal—and an estimated one percent only of mankind is homosexual—it would end the human race in a generation.

Divine Image

Only heterosexual relationships align with the divine plan for mankind. Out physical time-limited human condition is merely the "clay model" which the Creator is shaping into His divine image—individuals who will live forever as a part of the divine Family. God reveals Himself as "Father." Jesus is His firstborn Son. Men and women can become His children, brothers and sisters of Jesus and joint-heirs with Him of the created universe.

God, in other words, is a Family. This relationship is reflected in His church, which is "the Bride of Christ" (Ephesians 5:25–32). We were created "male and female"—perfectly designed physically and emotionally only for a heterosexual relationship. The divine instruction was that each pair is to "cleave to one another," partners—male and female—contributing to a unified whole, and neither complete without the other.

Battling Bishops

Debate over homosexuality has raged within the Anglican community worldwide for over a decade. A 1991 confusing statement made a distinction between homosexual practice in the general church populace and among the "clergy." It was deemed okay for the former, wrong for the latter. A line was drawn: homosexuality is acceptable but its practice is sin—if you are a bishop.

Sparked by the proposed appointment of an openly homosexual priest as a bishop, big clerical guns have been placed in battle order to defend both abstinence (evangelicals) and practice (the "liberal wing" of the church). Schism has been threatened, especially from overseas bishops (Nigeria, West Indies, Indian Ocean). Both claim biblical authority for their position! A surface unity evolved only when the homosexual candidate for Bishop withdrew in the English church.

The House of Bishops in the United States has now "set the cat among the pigeons" by appointing an active homosexual priest as Bishop of New Hampshire. As of writing, the prospect of schism hovers.

But Is It Sin?

However Paul's words (Romans 1:26–32) are interpreted by those who seek solace in an interpretation contrary to their face value, there can be no doubt about the original divine instruction in the Old Testament. Said God, "*When a man lies with a male as with a woman, both have committed something perverse; they will certainly be put to death*" (Leviticus 20:13). As Paul tells us, "*The wages of sin is death.*"

(Remember, the only "Bible" known to Paul and the first Christians was what we know as the *Old Testament*. The New Testament was yet to be written.)

Indeed the foul diseases and curtailed lifespan (up to twenty years below average) of practicing homosexuals bear witness to the destructive perverseness of

the practice.

Hence Paul's urgent warnings that Christians must avoid such relationships—their eternal salvation is at stake (1 Corinthians 6:9, KJV).

Male and female homosexuality is "*contrary to nature*," Paul asserts (Romans 1:26), and an "*error*" (v. 27). It is not in our genetic inheritance, in other words, but is an acquired mindset. It is a thought pattern that becomes fixed habit, spilling over into practice. It is—like adultery—learned behavior and equally sinful. Says James, "*Each person is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed by his own lusts. Then, when the passion has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin when it reaches maturity produces death*" (James 1:13–15).

Homosexuality is, in the divine perspective, *sinful*. It is *not* to be contrasted with heterosexual behavior but with defects in the latter—as, for example, pedophilia, bestiality, narcissism, transvestism, or promiscuity in and out of marriage. All are perversions of divinely intended sexual behavior. There may well be some individual predisposition to any of these—but whatever it is has to be overcome. And there is victory through the power of God's Spirit.

But that is why Jesus Christ came, that our sin, whether it is envy or greed or adultery or promiscuity—or homosexuality—can be repented of and forgiven through the love that God has for us, expressed in the awesome sacrifice of His Son.

With the indwelling Spirit of God to strengthen us, a new pattern of behavior can take hold. Wrote the apostle John, "*If we confess our sins he is so faithful and just as to forgive us our sins—and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (1 John 1:8–10). There is hope for *all* sinners!

All of us have character defects. In general, homosexuals have since childhood unfulfilled emotional needs, and life's circumstances may for some have shaped an irrational detachment from and distaste for the opposite sex. Jesus addressed in principle the heart of the issue of human sexuality: even harboring *the thought* of adultery is sinful, He says (Matthew 5:27–30). That's a principle that applies, too, to homosexuality and all other human frailty.

Homosexual thought and practice can be—and has been—overcome. As with all sin, it can be forsaken and forgiven. There is hope.

Hope!

To enter the Family relationship with God is a matter of choice. God calls on all of mankind to choose the way of life He has revealed. It's time to resolve mankind's sexual enigma by a return to the basic principles of human relationships which are the foundation for life—for now, and for the endless ages of eternity.

But God requires holiness of life. Wrote the apostle Paul, "*Be not misled; neither profligates, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor partakers in homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the avaricious, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor robbers shall inherit God's Kingdom*" (1 Corinthians 6:9–10).

The apostle doesn't stop there. He continues, "*And some of you were just that [including, he says, homosexuals]; but you were washed and you were made holy and you were made righteous by the power of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God*" (v. 11).

Virtually *all* sin can—upon repentance—be forgiven through Jesus Christ. To make sense of this life and to live forever, everyone must forsake what God says is sinful and to turn to what is pure and holy.

There's no other way to become part of the eternal Family of God.

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FAITH IN GOD

by Bill Glover



Bill Glover

of the “hopes” we have could be cited, but none actually represent faith—complete confidence!

On the other hand, is there *anything* in which we humans can have *true genuine faith*? In reality, there is only one thing we humans can have total and absolute faith in. But there are many factors which regulate to what degree we can actually *exercise* that faith. That one thing we can actually have and truly exercise faith in is the Almighty Creator God. But case histories show that very few of us can actually claim to have and exercise that kind of believing faith. *Why?* (See John 14:12–24.)

Only one of the many scriptures from the Holy Bible that expounds this subject of faith is Hebrews 11:1. Here we find, “Now faith is *being sure of* what we hope for and certain of *what we do not see.*” And verse 3 states, “By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command.” Then verse 6 states, “Without faith it is impossible to please God *because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.*” James 1:5–8 then nails down these passages. James says that if any of us lack anything we are to *ask God* for it, but when we ask WE MUST BELIEVE AND NOT DOUBT, FOR HE WHO DOUBTS WILL RECEIVE NOTHING FROM GOD SINCE HE IS DOUBT-MINDED AND UNSTABLE IN ALL THAT HE DOES.

We need to review the aforementioned texts carefully since they establish the very basis for faith and how we can both have and exercise faith. As Hebrews 11:1 states, faith is *being sure* of something even though it is not yet in our sight—even though we do not have it as yet! It goes on to say we must *be certain* of things we do not yet see or have. Pause and let those words sink deep into our souls and minds. Then concentrate on verse 6, which states, “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” Thus if any of us have a desire to please God we must *have and exercise* faith. It does NOT say we must have “hope” in order to please God. There is a vast difference between “faith” and “hope.”

The second half of verse 6 states, “Anyone who comes to Him [God] **MUST BELIEVE THAT HE EXISTS AND THAT HE REWARDS THOSE WHO EARNESTLY SEEK HIM.**” These are powerful words, which find most of us short before God. In today’s world (especially in America) there is a heated and growing debate over the subject of evolution. The contention is whether public schools should teach only evolution as the origin of life on earth or if public schools should also teach “Intelligent Design” as a possible source of life on earth. Let us use this debate for a moment so as to understand this subject of faith.

First and foremost, we must realize that there is absolutely no true scientific evidence to support the *theory* of evolution. There are no missing links bridging the gaps between the many different life forms on earth. On the other hand, there is ABSOLUTE SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE THAT LIFE COMES ONLY FROM PRE-EXISTING LIFE OF THE SAME KIND. This point automatically brings up the valid age-old question (that clearly debunks the theory of evolution) of “Which came first, the chicken or the egg?” It is a proven scientific fact that we must have an egg in order to have a chicken, and we also must have a female chicken in order to have an egg. But merely having a female chicken so as to have an egg is not enough

since we must also have another absolutely necessary ingredient—a male chicken!

I first used this “chicken and egg” illustration in 1955. My wife and I had just married and I had rented a cottage in South Pasadena, California from a graduate from the University of Washington. He had all kinds of degrees in geology, archeology, anthropology, evolution, etc. In interviewing me as a potential renter he learned that I was a Christian that believed in the Bible and creation. He approved me as a renter without any harassment at the time. However, each month he would come in person to collect the rent and each time he would try and engage me in a discussion (argument) over creation and evolution. He would insult me for my faith in God and creation.

I did not oppose him verbally for three months. As the time approached for him to come by to collect the rent for the fourth month, I determined to stop his insults once and for all. True to form, he immediately began to ridicule me for my beliefs. But I stopped him with the statement “Wait just a minute—I have a proposition to make to you!” I then proposed to him that if he could give a clear, scientific answer to an extremely simple question, I would renounce my belief in God and the Bible and embrace evolution. I could see from his facial expressions that he was elated at the prospect of debunking God and creation and winning someone over to embrace evolution. So he heartily agreed to accept my challenge believing that he (with all his degrees) could answer any and all questions I could pose on the subject of evolution.

I then began to toy with his mind by feigning embarrassment over my asking such a simple question to such an educated mind. Actually I toyed with him for several minutes by making such statements as, “I am almost ashamed to ask you such a simple question, which I know you will be able to answer immediately with clear scientific proof.” I actually toyed with him to the extent that he began to get agitated that I was so hesitant to ask the question. When I felt I had him primed enough, I quietly said, “If you can give me *clear and articulate scientific evidence* as to which came first, the chicken or the egg, I will embrace evolution.”

You would have thought a huge mule had just kicked him in the stomach. His face turned both white and red and various shades in between. The question literally took his breath away. When he gained a little composure, he quickly glanced at his watch and stated, “Oh, I am twenty minutes late for an appointment,” and then hurriedly rushed to his car and drove off. I never saw the man after that. A few days later he telephoned asking that in the future I mail the rent check to him—which I did.

This was an “educated” man, but he had educated himself in false “assumed” information while refusing to look at the true scientific facts involved. He knew beyond the shadow of any doubt that you must have a female chicken to have an egg and you must have an egg to produce a chicken. And just having a female chicken is only half of what you need. You also need a perfectly formed male chicken. This same principle applies to all forms of birds, mammals, fish, insects, and reptiles.

The existence of a human is perhaps the best example I could use since humans are the “most advanced and complex” species of life on earth. When we carefully examine the human being we should be awe struck. A very large number of humans today reject the idea of “intelligent design” as an explanation of life on Earth. Yet, look at the human body itself. I personally do not know how many different parts there are in the human body, but there must be thousands and each of these thousands of parts represent absolute *miracles*. Let us, for the sake of illustration, take the eye. It would take literally thousands of pages to describe the eye and how it functions and what these functions allow the human (and all other life forms) to accomplish. The deeper you probe into the eye, the more you will see just how complex eyesight really is—that there is unmistakable INTELLIGENT DESIGN that brought eyesight into being. And this is only one of the many senses and bodily functions that clearly demonstrate “intelligent design.”

Continued next page

Take any other sense that the body possesses. The sense of smell is miraculous and shows intelligent design. Then what about the sense of taste? And then there is the sense of feel plus the sense of sound (hearing). Then there is another “sense” that is all too often overlooked. That is the sense of “balance”—we call that “equilibrium.” No species of mammal, animal, reptile, bird, or insect could exist without equilibrium. Every life form must *start out* with equilibrium, else it could not exist, let alone “evolve” into another species.

With what we have just reviewed, we need to realize there are literally thousands of other factors in “life” we have not even considered. Take the bone structures of the various vertebrates, which enable all to function as it was intended to function. Take the “mouth” used to ingest food that sustains life. Then look at the digestive systems and the digestive juices that each possesses. Look at the stomach and the intestines and the bowels and the urinary tract. Look at the heart and the circulatory system that enables the body to function. Look at the lungs and how and why they function. And what about the kidneys and the liver? And what about the reproductive organs and how they function? What about the nerves that signal pain or other factors? Unquestionably there is “intelligent design” in all these bodily functions.

There are many other organs within the body that perform specific *intelligently designed* functions that enable that body to live and perform. As I stated earlier, literal books could be written (and have been written) on just a few of these points. Since I want to get back to the subject of faith, let me draw this section to a close by quoting Romans 1:19–20:

“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who SUPPRESS THE TRUTH by their wickedness, since WHAT MAY BE KNOWN ABOUT GOD IS PLAIN TO THEM [if they had a willingness to see], BECAUSE GOD HAS MADE IT PLAIN TO THEM. For since the creation of the world *God’s invisible qualities*—His eternal power and divine nature—have been *clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.*” Clearly, if a person wants to know anything about God, all he need do is study what we call “nature” and we see God in all His glory.

The point is that, as Hebrews 11:6 states, *without faith it is impossible to please God.* We must not only claim to “believe” in God, we must KNOW that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him. It is NOT enough to merely claim to “believe in a god.” As the Bible states, there are many “gods” and many “lords,” but to God’s true people “there is but one God, the Father from whom all things came and *for whom we live* [are supposed to live] and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live!” (1 Corinthians 8:5–6).

But the question on the agenda today is **faith toward and in that God!** How does this faith come about? Do humans just automatically have this faith? Can they exercise and display this faith at will? Is there something we humans must do to have this faith? If so, what would that be?

From what we have already learned, we must first PROVE TO OURSELVES THAT GOD EXISTS. That proof does not come merely through “casual” study. I have already given you the basis for this study. We must prove conclusively to ourselves that God exists and that He rewards us by keeping His promises.

There is the need to make clear that no one can merely accept Christ as Savior unless or until God the Father calls that person (John 6:44). Do you personally understand that important spiritual principle from the mouth of Jesus Christ Himself? If God the Father has not called you and given you over to Christ for safekeeping, then you cannot and will not understand these words. On the other hand, if God the Father has singled you out, called you, and given you over to Jesus Christ, then you are not going to escape this calling. Even a casual study of the Bible shows clearly that once God the Father begins to deal with a human being He expects that human being to respond to that calling through *spiritual growth and development.* Let us return to Hebrews 11:1 again for a most important point. The first part of that verse states that faith is the assurance (being sure of) things we do not as yet have in our possession and *being certain of things we do not yet see!* Now notice the rest of that verse: **“This is what the ancients were commended for!”**

One of the best examples of this is none other than Abraham. As Galatians 3:6 states emphatically, **“ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD AND IT [THAT**

BELIEF, OR FAITH] WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS!” What did Abraham then do? Did he go about repeating “I believe in God” or “I have faith in God”? No, as Hebrews 11:7 says, **“RIGHTEOUSNESS COMES BY FAITH.”** Then as verse 8 states, Abraham *did something!* He got up off his backside and went where God directed (carefully study verses 7–12). Did you catch what these verses say? Study the entire chapter of Hebrews 11 and see what these many godly people did to demonstrate to God they *believed Him and believed in what He had promised to them.* Most sacrificed their lives *as a demonstration of this faith and confidence!*

Faith is A LIVING THING. It is a relationship between the human and his Maker—the Almighty Creator God. God has given each of us sufficient knowledge that He exists. The next step then is ours. We must begin to *look to, trust in, and rely on* that God for all that we need to fulfill our purpose in life, and we are to learn what that purpose is and how we are to fulfill it by looking into that mirror of God’s Word and digesting what God requires of us. We are to come to the point the disciples reached when Peter said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We *believe* and *know* that you are the Holy One of God” (John 6:68).

Keep in mind that Christ had just repeated His dogmatic statement of John 6:44: “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws

him (compare verse 65). Then verse 66 shows that many of those who had been following Him turned back and no longer followed Him. The point is quite simple. The twelve disciples truly recognized who Christ was and what He represented. All the others were more curious than anything else. They did *not* recognize that Christ was the true Messiah who had come to bring salvation to

mankind (see verse 68 again). But the twelve were specifically chosen and called (1 Corinthians 1:26–31). And as Paul explained in Romans 11:29, **THE GIFTS AND CALL FROM GOD ARE IRREVOCABLE!**

But let us dig a little deeper into faith in God and see what that really is. Again, the prime example of faith in God is found in the example of Abraham. Galatians 3:6 contains a profound statement: “Abraham believed God!” Paul further explains this in Hebrews 11:8–12. But Paul really nails it down in Romans 4:16–25. Let us go through these verses and see what God is telling us.

Verses 16 and 17 tell us that the promise [of eternal life] “comes by faith SO THAT IT MAY BE BY GRACE [not because of our own human righteousness] and may be GUARANTEED TO ALL OF ABRAHAM’S OFFSPRING.... He [Abraham] is our [spiritual] father in the sight of God, in whom we believe—the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not [present] as though they were.”

Verse 18: “Against all hope [though the promises made seeded impossible] Abraham in hope BELIEVED [trusted God]....” As verse 20 states, “He did not waver through unbelief [doubt] regarding the promises of God but was STRENGTHENED IN HIS FAITH AND GAVE GLORY TO GOD.” Then, as verses 21 and 22 state, he was “fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why it was CREDITED to him as righteousness.”

Now notice what God is saying in verses 23 and 24: “The words ‘it was credited to him’ were written *not for him alone*, but also *for us*, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.”

But we must know beyond the shadow of any doubt that God is true to His word—as was Abraham. All those saints mentioned in Hebrews 11 demonstrated their faith and belief in God by and through the deeds of their lives. That included a harlot named Rahab (Hebrews 11:31). James explains Abraham’s and Rahab’s cases further in chapter 2, verses 20–26. By carefully studying these verses we find that “faith without deeds is useless” (verse 20). As verse 21 states, Abraham was considered righteous by what he did in being willing to offer his son Isaac on the altar. As verse 17 states, “Faith by itself, *if it is not accompanied by action* is dead.” Then verse 19 states, “Show me your [claimed] faith *without deeds* and I will show you my faith *by what I do.*”

It is not enough to merely “claim” to have faith in God. We must demonstrate that faith *by our actions* (carefully review verses 20–24). Thus we find that Rahab gained favor with God by what she did in rejecting her country and accepting the God of Israel. She literally laid her human life on the line *by her actions* since she would have been killed had others in her country learned of her actions. As verse 26 states, “As the

body without the spirit is dead, *so faith without deeds is dead.*”

As followers of Christ we are to have and demonstrate *living* faith and not merely a “profession” of faith. Our actions in our daily lives must back up our claims. We are talking about a faith that is vibrantly alive and thriving.

If you find that you are lacking in this living and vibrant faith, then there are actions you can take to rectify the situation. The very first thing you must do is be willing to admit your failings and weaknesses. Then you must *humbly* go to God in earnest prayer and ask His help and guidance in your deep and meaningful evaluation of your spiritual condition before God.

Carefully and prayerfully study every passage cited in this article, and then compare the message in each verse to you and your life. Look into that mirror of God’s Word (James 1:21–26) and allow God to show you how you appear to Him. This process should give you the incentive you need to truly repent and begin to trust God for the help you need to overcome your human weaknesses and sins.

Doing this *demonstrates* to God that you have a living and vibrant faith in Him and that your actions show this living faith.

Let me caution you that you cannot conjure up this kind of living faith. This kind of living faith comes from God as a gift, but it comes as we develop that close and intimate relationship with Him through prayer and Bible study—by *daily* talking and walking with God in our daily activities, and by evaluating our actions in light of clear instructions in the Bible.

Remember that you can have that rewarding God-granted and God-given faith *ONLY* if you maintain this intimate relationship with God on a

daily basis. Merely going to church on the Sabbath is not enough. There must be demonstrable fruits of the Spirit in our daily lives (see Galatians 5:22–26). We are to be diligent in replacing the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19–21) with the fruits of the Spirit. We cannot actually have faith in God and truly believe Him as Abraham and others did unless we are doing this.

If you find that you are short in this then you need to go to God in humble prayer and ask Him to grant to you what you lack. You can and should ask God to help you overcome your unbelief (Mark 9:23–24).

Remember that it is God who makes it possible for all of us to stand firm in Christ (2 Corinthians 1:21). That is because it is God who “anointed us and set His seal of ownership on us, and put His Spirit in our hearts as a deposit guaranteeing what is yet to come.”

As Paul further explains in Philippians 3:13–15, we are to forget our past mistakes once they are repented of and forgiven (1 John 2:1–2) and strain for what is ahead (in Christ). We are to press toward the goal God has set before us. And if we are spiritually mature we will have and maintain this view of God and our salvation. And as verse 15 states, “we are to live up to what we have learned!” If we do this we will then be *credited with righteousness* as was Abraham, Rahab, and so many others.

This then is the living faith that comes from God provided we are in contact with Him through diligent daily Bible study and prayer and in periodic fasting. As the Bible clearly teaches, the deeds and actions of our lives demonstrate to God that we literally belong to Him and are totally dedicated to doing His will. That is *living faith*—the kind that is acceptable to God. May God grant us this living faith!

A Crash Course on Prayer

by Lloyd W. Cary

IS YOUR PRAYER LIFE WHAT IT SHOULD BE? No—*of course not!* None of us pray as often or as fervently as we should. We all need a little “prompting” now and then. If you have been in God’s church very long, you have heard many sermons on prayer. There is a reason for that. As a Christian, earnest, heartfelt, persistent prayer is one of the most *difficult* things you will ever do! It is strenuous because it is spiritual, and by nature the carnal fleshly mind is the enemy of God (Romans 8:7).

In its simplest form, prayer is communicating with God, talking to Him and listening to Him. Prayer brings us into the very presence of God. David said, “*O Thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come*” (Psalms 65:2). If we are to grow in grace and knowledge, prayer is not an option!

Why pray? To receive *answers* to prayer, we must first pray—and pray in the right manner. God our Father desires fellowship with us, just as we do with our children. We can occasionally pray “on the go,” but we must also have quiet, private, quality time in His presence to have true “at-one-ment” with Him. We need to set apart a specific time daily to spend alone with God.

There are many reasons we neglect to pray: doubt, indifference, “too busy,” attitudinal problems, or some secret sin in our lives. These are obstacles we must overcome. For help in these areas, we suggest you send for our FREE booklet, *How to Be More Effective in Your Prayer Life*.

We draw close to God through prayer. He promised that He will draw near to us when we draw near to Him (Zechariah 1:3). Ideally, we should live in an attitude of prayer, constantly being in communion and fellowship with our heavenly Father every hour of the day.

The key factor in praying to get results is to pray according to God’s will. He is not obligat-

ed to answer contrary to His will. His will is revealed in His Word, the Bible. Either directly or by principle, the Bible contains the answer to every problem that confronts us. Search for the answer to your problem, then take it to God in prayer. When we pray according to His will, He hears us and answers our prayers. When we believe and pray in line with His Word, we can expect our prayers to be answered.

Obedience to God’s Word is a prerequisite: “And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, *because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight*” (1 John

We draw close to God through prayer. He promised that He will draw near to us when we draw near to Him.... Ideally, we should live in an attitude of prayer, constantly being in communion and fellowship with our heavenly Father every hour of the day.

3:22; see also Luke 6:46; Matthew 7:21–23).

The next step to praying effectively is to pray in faith. Jesus said, “Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, *believe* that ye receive them, and ye shall have them” (Mark 11:24). Faith is simply believing what God says is true. We must believe we receive when we pray. God’s Word says He has given to *every* believer the measure of faith (Romans 12:3). Praying in faith is merely having confidence in God’s willingness to use His power to answer our prayers. We exercise and develop that faith by spending time in God’s Word. He wrote it for *you!*

Once we have prayed in faith, we must stand our ground until the answer comes. Sometimes His answer is *Yes* and sometimes it is *No*. And

sometimes it is *Not yet; wait awhile*. Be persistent. Remember the parable of the importunate woman and the unrighteous judge (Luke 18:1–7).

Jesus said that His Father would grant whatever we ask when we ask *in His name*. Although not politically correct, your Bible says true Christianity is absolutely *unique*: “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). Jesus is the name that is above *every* name. When we pray through Jesus’ name according to the Word in faith, we immediately get the Father’s attention. When we pray in Jesus’ name, God will quickly respond to us.

Unforgiveness is a huge hindrance to having our prayers answered. Jesus said if we do not forgive men their trespasses, our Father will not forgive our sins: “And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses” (Mark 11:25–26). When we have been hurt or offended, we should run to God. Ask Him for comfort and healing. We must walk in love and forgiveness to have our prayers answered.

So continue in fellowship with God. He created us to be in fellowship with Him. Prayer is a necessity. We will never get to the place where we don’t need God. We are dependent upon Him whether we know it or not. Our greatest desire should be to learn of Him and to know Him more and more intimately, “For with God *nothing* shall be impossible” (Luke 1:37).

Prayer is the doorway into the mightiest release of power that is known to man. Stay connected to God through prayer and obedience so He can bring His will to pass in your life.

BEWARE of the Doctrine of Postmodernism

by Adrian Davis



Adrian Davis

THERE IS A POWERFUL MOVEMENT that began to gain popularity in the 1960s, gained incredible momentum in the 1990s, and has since spread all over the world. It is subtle, but once you know what to look for, you'll see it everywhere—even in God's church.

Our World in Three Stages

The Bible speaks of the world before the flood, the world to come, and this present evil world. This present evil world can be divided up into three distinct phases.

First there was the pre-modern world. It was a world of mysticism. It was a very religious world with great respect for the supernatural.

Then followed the modern world, which really came to maturity during the Age of the Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution. Its focus was the natural rather than the supernatural. It focused on reason rather than religion. And where the premodern world defined right and wrong by what's best for the group, the modern world defined right and wrong by what's best for the individual. The modern world became self-absorbed and rational.

The postmodern world began in the 1960s. Where the premodern world defined reality by the supernatural, and the modern world defined reality by the natural, the postmodern world denies reality altogether.

According to postmodernism, there is no *objective* reality. There is no "grand narrative" that defines reality for everybody. There is no one truth. There is only subjective truth. "Your truth is true for you and mine is true for me."

The Architects

"Reality is socially constructed." The two architects of this movement are Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. Derrida was a French Jewish intellectual philosopher. Foucault was also a French philosopher. Foucault suffered from severe mental illness and became preoccupied with the dividing line between madness and sanity. He was known as "the great explorer of the perverse" because he believed he had to explore every perversion from personal experience.

Derrida believed that all norms in society needed to be torn down and reality needed to be reconstructed. He believed that reality is shaped through language and must therefore be reconstructed through language.

Postmodernist philosophy is at the root of political correctness. Most people believe political correctness is about tolerance. It's not! It's about social coercion. A new reality has been under construction since the 60s.



Jacques Derrida

At its heart, postmodernism is a fight for language. Christianity is losing. So much so, that there are now many postmodern Christian theologians. Postmodern Christian theologians believe in "weak theology." Wikipedia says,

"Weak theology is a manner of thinking about theology from a deconstructive point of view. [Deconstruction denies the possibility of essential or intrinsic meaning.] The style of thought owes a debt to Jacques Derrida, especially in light of his idea of a 'weak force.' Weak theology is weak because it takes a non-dogmatic, perspectival approach to theology.



Michael Foucault

Proponents of weak theology believe that dominant contemporary explications of theology are inherently ideological, totalizing, and militant. In response, weak theology expresses itself through acts of interpretation."

In a nutshell, what postmodern theologians believe is nothing in the Bible can be taken as objective reality. Everything boils down to interpretation and, therefore, all doctrines are equally valid. One thing they all agree on is that what is not acceptable: people who are rigid in their beliefs. In a world where there is no objective reality, no one has the right to say they have "the truth."

The Faith Once Delivered

The Church of God must protect itself from "weak theology." We have doctrines that have been handed down to us from Jesus Christ and His disciples—and those doctrines are foundational. Let's hold on to them.

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 1:3).

Brothers and sisters, let's follow the example of the apostle Paul, who, at the end of his life, was able to say,

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:3-8).

Notice that there was a stark contrast between those who set their affections on this present evil world and Paul, who set his affection on the first resurrection. Let's be very clear about where we are in the course of history. The Kingdom is not here yet. We are in this present evil world. Let's be especially mindful of the rising tide of postmodernism and how it is creating a new reality through coercion. We can compromise and swim with the tide, but playing games with words doesn't change reality. God's Word says,

"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!" (Isaiah 5:20-21).

Brethren, be on guard against false doctrine, no matter what it's called. Speak truth and light not lies and darkness. Eventually, the proponents of this new reality and true Christians will clash. "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:9-13).

Love One Another

Commit to loving everyone—especially the household of God. No matter what we might face in the dark days ahead, let's love one another. Christ said by this shall all men know that we are His disciples, if we love one another. We can only really love one another if we truly love God and His truth. It may cost us in this life, but our hope is not in this age, it's in the age to come.

The Changing Times

by Vivian Hall

Pondering things around me, I see changes that are amazing, uncomfortable, and drastically different from what I am accustomed to and accept as usual and normal. Unacceptable has become acceptable. Notions, concepts, and actions have become different as I watch years go by. Perhaps this is improvement. If so, that fact eludes me.

As a youth, I knew peers and others used drugs. I did not conceive "drug of choice" as commonplace. The word "gay" meant happy. The phrase "gender of choice" was not known. Leaders were people who were followed, not despots to quake in fear of.

Were things better? The answer is not clear.

Lines have been crossed and drawn of which I was not even aware. Events and actions blur and shift. Computer skills and knowledge flood society. My great-granddaughter operates and wreaks havoc with hers, even disrupting the television. Life and concepts twirl dizzily around that confuse more often than enlight-

en me. The book of Daniel, chapter 12, speaks of knowledge increasing and many running to and fro. I see the "to and fro." I am looking for the increased knowledge to bring palatable fruit. I so wait for the righteous to be revealed and stand up.

The great divide involves *age* and *youth*.

Different Times

*Things have changed from what I used to see;
Perceptions are different from what they used to be.
Old actions and notions no longer are;
Ideas and deeds disputed far
From the accustomed way: What to do? What to say?
The learned path no longer has the depth, to guide or direct nor accept.
A new set of standards of what could be if; feels lots like falling off a cliff.
Set in my ways I can no longer be;
What is, what was, are not as I see.*

Vivian Hall

The Surest Method of Bible Interpretation

WE ARE TOLD IN 2 TIMOTHY 2:15-17 to “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness....” As with most things, there is a right way and a wrong way to go about studying God’s Word.

Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth

First, let us note some of the *false methods of Bible interpretation*.

Many well-meaning, but mistaken, students of God’s Word have placed an undue reverence upon the Scriptures manifesting itself in an effort to find occult or *hidden meanings* for every nuance of every letter and every word. Various mysterious “Bible Codes” are often suggested for truer or deeper understanding of God’s Word. This method often amounts to idolatry of the letter and leads us away from the real meaning of Scripture. This is the reason so many men today can find more written *between* the lines than *in* the lines of Scripture itself. Many self-proclaimed scholars can by this method tell one more about what is *not* plainly written than about what is written. They claim to find out more about many subjects of the Bible than God Himself has revealed. They can seemingly prove many doctrines that are not one time mentioned in Scripture, but they seem never to be able to prove those that *are* found many times in the Bible.

Others display a positive hostility to the text resulting in a vain attempt to eliminate the supernatural element and the means of redemption through Jesus Christ. This amounts to utter destruction of the Word of God as far as actual and real benefits to the individual in this life and the life to come are concerned.

A third category of misinterpreting the Bible is by insisting that a dispensational pattern be imposed upon the Scriptures for proper understanding.



“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH” (2 Timothy 2:15).

Dispensationalism is a method of interpreting history that divides God’s work and purposes toward mankind into different periods of time. The usual breakdown of the dispensational theory is as follows: the Dispensation of Innocence, Dispensation of Conscience, the Dispensation of Human Government, the Dispensation of Promise, the Dispensation of Law, the Dispensation of Grace, and Millennial Kingdom of Christ (Scofield Reference Bible, January 1, 1917, p. 5). One of the main objectives of the dispensationalist is to *contrast* law and grace. “Since we are now in the dispensation of Grace,” the dispensationalists maintain, “therefore the law is ‘done away.’” Preterists lean heavily upon some form of dispensational theory of interpretation. For example, Daniel is interpreted as events that happened in the second century BC while Revelation is interpreted as events that happened in the first century AD.

Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth (2 Timothy 2:15)

Speaking of itself, the Bible tells us, “For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (1 Peter 1:21, NKJV).

The chief rule for *correctly* understanding the Bible is to gather the precise meaning the writers intended to convey from the Scriptures themselves. Apply the same principles, rules, grammatical process, and exercise of common sense and reason to the Bible that we apply to other books. In doing this, one must take the Bible as *literal* when it is at all possible. When a statement is found that cannot possibly be literal, such as Jesus being a “door” or of a woman being clothed

Whenever there is a dispute about the meaning of a section of Scripture, a favorite ploy of gainsayers and Scripture wresters (2 Peter 3:16) is, “Well, that’s your interpretation!” as though this snap answer should shut down all further controversy. The apostle Peter said, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: AND BE READY ALWAYS TO GIVE AN ANSWER TO EVERY MAN THAT ASKETH YOU a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15). We should always be ready to explain why we believe what we believe. Jesus said in John 10:35, “... the scripture cannot be broken.”

by Lloyd W. Cary

with the sun and standing on the moon and on her head a crown of twelve stars, or of land animals coming out of the sea, and other statements which are obviously *not* literal, then we know the language is *figurative*. In such cases we must get the *literal truth* conveyed by the figurative language. The truth intended to be conveyed will then be as literal as if it were expressed in literal language without the use of such figures. After all, figurative language expresses literal truth as much as if such figures were not used.

In a general sense, the best method of Bible interpretation embraces the following ideas:

- Be humble. This is mandatory. “Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? *them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts*. For precept *must be* upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and there a little*” (Isaiah 28:9-10). Take the Bible for what it *says*. Do not seek to find hidden meanings to the words of Scripture, or add or subtract from the Scripture (Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18-19). When human language is used in other books, men do not try make them mean anything that *they* want them to mean. Why should they do so with God’s Word?
- Do not change the literal to a spiritual or symbolic meaning. Read it, believe it, and act upon it, even if you do not wholly understand it at the time. God’s Word will never fail you.
- Give the same meaning to the words of prophecy that are given to the words of history. Do not try to read obscure symbols or meanings *into* the Bible.
- Be aware of the law of double reference and prophetic perspective.
- Be aware of the primary meaning of words and their common use in the age in which they are used, and the importance of synonyms.
- Be aware of the grammatical construction and idiomatic peculiarities of the languages of the Bible. Note the *context*, both immediate and remote. Remember: a *text* without a *context* is very often a *pretext*.
- Important! Get *all* the Scriptures on a subject and compare all the parallel passages. Consider the purpose and intent of each writer in each particular book.
- Note the agreement of Scripture in its several parts, its prophecies, and their fulfillment. Learn the historical background of each writer and the circumstances under which he wrote.
- Understand the general plan of the entire Bible, and its moral and spiritual teachings. (Send for our free booklet, *God’s Seasonal Plan*.)
- Discover the manners and customs of the particular age and land of each writer.
- Understand how to interpret prophecy, poetry, allegories, symbols, parables, figures of speech, types, and all other forms of human expression. No figure of speech ever does away with the literal truth, but merely expresses it in another way. (Send for our free pamphlet, *Can You Understand Bible Prophecy?*)
- Be aware of the different classes of people dealt with in Scripture, and the application of the different principles and rules of interpretation.

The overall rule of thumb is this: Take the Bible *literally* wherever it is at all possible. When the language *cannot* be taken literally, then we know it is *figurative*. Then get the literal truth conveyed by the figurative language as if it were expressed in literal language without the use of figures. It is a true saying that the Bible itself is its own best interpreter. This is indeed the surest method of interpreting the Bible.

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How to Study Your Bible
 and learn how to comprehend and retain what you
 read in the Scriptures.

Request your copy today!

Growing Older Together

by Lloyd W. Cary



Lloyd W. Cary

YOUNG PEOPLE CAN HARDLY WAIT to grow older. Many even go to great lengths to make you think they are older than they really are—maybe by dressing as older people do, by carefully cultivating a beard or mustache, or just by putting on an air of adult sophistication. But youth is fleeting.

Sometimes, as health fails and circumstances force him or her to slow down, the would-be adult all too soon turns into a would-be youth. How we long for those “good old days.” It seems even nostalgia isn’t what it used to be! Remember when you could still read without glasses? When you were never plagued with an aching back? And when you could remember things without having to write them down, instead of, as is now the case, forgetting to read what you’ve written down to remember?

And who besides an older person can really know the sorrows that old age often brings? What teenager can possibly know the grief of losing a marriage mate of several decades, or the loneliness that comes with the loss of this devoted companionship? Or feel the insecurity that comes with failing eyesight, faulty hearing, and feebleness? Or know what it means to struggle to make both ends meet on a small pension? Or know the empty feeling of wondering, “Will I be here next spring to hear the robins sing again?”

Yet, as problematic as old age can be, it does have its compensations. Years of experience have bettered your discernment and insight into the problems that people have. Think of the knowledge you have accumulated, especially if you are walking in God’s way! Would you trade the energy of youth for all the years of accumulated knowledge you have? You have undoubtedly become wiser, more balanced, and almost surely you have a deeper appreciation of life.

Learn to Cooperate With the Inevitable

There is an outlook that makes life much easier: “Learn to cooperate with the inevitable.” To resist the inevitable results in futility, frustration, resentment, and a feeling of helplessness. Scripture tells us, “And as it is appointed unto men once to die; but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). Death is a part of life. The Bible calls death “an enemy” and prophesies, “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Corinthians 15:26). God is working out His plan here below as is revealed through His Sabbath and Holy Days. In the meantime, we are born, we grow to maturity, and we die. It is inevitable. Wise king Solomon put it this way: “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die...” (Ecclesiastes 3:1–2). He went on to say, “For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten” (Ecclesiastes 9:5).

Many physical, mental, and emotional changes occur as we grow older. Physical weakness saps our energy and vigor. The mirror reveals new lines and wrinkles and a gradual loss of hair pigmentation and sometimes of hair itself. Our eyes grow dim and our hearing faint. Occasionally we may suffer some memory gaps. Hopefully, new relationships are created when the children marry, and again when grandchildren arrive. Retirement imposes an entirely new outlook on life.

In truth, advancing years can be burdensome and oppressive. Read Ecclesiastes 12:1–8. Still, consider God’s servants in Bible times. Although they finally succumbed to death, they gained both wisdom and understanding, which brought great satisfaction in old age. (See Genesis 25:8; 35:29; Job 12:12; 42:17.) How did they succeed in growing older happily? Surely it was by living in harmony with the principles that we today find recorded in the Bible (Psalm 119:105; 2 Timothy 3:16–17).

Paul, in his letter to Titus, offered sound advice to those who are growing older. He wrote: “That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things” (Titus 2:2–3). Heeding these words can help us face the challenges of growing older.

Adapting to Your Children’s Independence

Our children are not clones. They will do things differently than we would do them. They will make choices you would not have made. They are in the process of changing roles in their lives. Changing roles call for adaptability. How true this proves to be when adult children leave home and get married! As the book of Ephesians puts it, “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh” (Ephesians 5:31). For many parents, this is the first reminder that they are getting older. Though happy that their offspring have come of age, parents often worry about whether

they did all they could to prepare the children for independence. An “empty nest” syndrome may develop as they may miss having them around the house.

Understandably, parents continue to concern themselves with the welfare of their children, even after the children leave home. We wonder if they are all right; if they are making wise decisions for all involved. They want to help, but not to smother. “If I could only hear from them more often, it would make me happy,” said one mother. A father relates, “When our children left home, it was a very difficult time. It left a great gap in our family because we had always done everything together.” In many cases, parents reach out to make new friends and acquaintances to help fill the gap. Often they turn to helping other people.

When children get married, the role of the parents changes. Genesis 2:24 states, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” Recognition of the godly principles of headship and good order will help parents to keep things in their proper perspective (1 Corinthians 11:3; 14:33, 40).

Reinvigorating Your Marriage Bond

These can be strenuous times for families. People react in various ways to reaching middle age. Some men dress differently in an attempt to appear “younger.” Many women worry about the changes that menopause brings. Sadly, some middle-aged persons provoke their mates to resentment and jealousy by flirting with younger members of the opposite sex. Godly older men, though, are “sound in mind,” curbing improper desires (1 Peter 4:7). Mature women likewise work to maintain the stability of their marriages, out of love for their husbands and a desire to please God.

Under inspiration, King Lemuel recorded praise for the “virtuous woman” who rewards her husband: “She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life” (Proverbs 31:12). A Christian husband will not fail to appreciate how his wife strives to cope with any emotional upset she experiences during her middle years. His love will prompt him to “praise her” (verse 28).

During the busy child-rearing years, both parents may have gladly put aside personal desires to attend to your children’s needs. After their departure, it is time to refocus their married life. It would be a good time to renew courtship with your mate all over again.” Mature couples keep an eye on each other’s health and remind each other of the need for exercise. So as not to feel lonely, it is a good time to show hospitality to other members of the congregation. Yes, showing interest in others brings blessings. Moreover, it pleases God (Philippians 2:4; Hebrews 13:2, 16).

Be aware that Satan the devil delights in destroying families and may use these times of change and adaptability to cause rifts and hard feelings amongst in-laws, parents, and children. This is a grand time to invoke the principle in James 4:7: “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” Do not allow a communication gap to develop. Your being open and honest can help cement your marriage bond, giving it a resilience that will thwart the attacks of Satan, the marriage wrecker.

Enjoy Your Grandchildren

Grandchildren are “the crown” of the elderly (Proverbs 17:6). The companionship of grandchildren can truly be a delight—lively and refreshing. The Bible speaks well of Lois, a grandmother who, with her daughter Eunice, shared her beliefs with her infant grandson Timothy. This youngster grew up knowing that both his mother and his grandmother valued Bible truth (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14, 15).

Here, then, is a special area in which grandparents can make a most valuable contribution. As grandparents, you have already shared your knowledge of God’s purposes with your children. Now you can do likewise with yet another generation! Many young children *thrive* to hear their grandparents recount Bible stories. Of course, you do not take over the father’s responsibility to inculcate Bible truths in his children (Deuteronomy 6:7). Rather, you *complement* this. May your prayer be that of the psalmist: “Now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come” (Psalms 71:18; 78:5, 6).

Sadly, some grandparents so spoil the little ones that tensions develop between the grandparents and their grown children. However, your sincere kindness may perhaps make it easy for your grandchildren to confide in you when they do not feel inclined to reveal matters to their parents. Sometimes the youngsters hope that their indulgent grandparents will side with them against their parents. What then? Exercise wisdom and encourage your grandchildren to be open with their parents. You can explain that this pleases God (Ephesians 6:1–3). If necessary, you may volunteer to pave the way for the youngsters’ approach by speaking with their parents. Be frank with your grandchildren about what you have learned over the years. Your honesty and candor can benefit them. Remember younger people need a good example, one only *you* can provide.

Adjust Even More As You Age

As the years roll by, you will find that you cannot do all that you used to or all that you want to. How does one come to terms with the aging process? In your mind you may feel 30 years old, but a glance in the mirror betrays a different reality. Do not be discouraged. The psalmist beseeched God: "Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth..." Make it your resolve to imitate the psalmist's determination. "But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more" (Psalms 71:9, 14).

Many have prepared in advance to increase their praise to God after retirement from secular work. "I planned ahead what I would do when our daughter left school," explains one father who is now retired. "I determined that I would start in the full-time preaching ministry, and I sold my business in order to be free to serve God more fully. I prayed for God's direction." If you are nearing the age of retirement, draw comfort from the declaration of our Grand Creator: "And even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you" (Isaiah 46:4).

Adapting to retirement from secular work may not be easy. The apostle Paul counseled, "That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience" (Titus 2:2), indicating that there is a call for general restraint, not just giving in to the tendency to seek a life of ease. There may be an even greater need for a routine and self-discipline after retirement than before. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). Retirement can be a golden opportunity to widen out our activities to help and encourage others (2 Corinthians 6:13). As we grow older, we can find other opportunities to zealously preach the good news at an adjusted pace, ways we did not have the time of opportunity to do previously.

Handling the Loss of Your Spouse

It is a sad but true that in the present system of things, married couples are eventually separated by death. Bereaved Christian spouses know that their loved ones are now sleeping, and they are confident that they will see them again (John 11:11, 23–25). Nonetheless, our loss is still grievous. How can the surviving one deal with it?

Seeing what a certain prophetess did when she was widowed after only seven years of marriage may help. Anna was eighty four years old when we read of her. We can be sure that she grieved when she lost her husband. How did she cope? She dedicated her life to God at the temple night and day (Luke 2:36–38). Anna's life of prayerful service was undoubtedly a great antidote to the sorrow and loneliness she felt as a widow. One of the most difficult things to bear is the loneliness of having no mate to talk to. In one sense, you may be in a better position to help others in similar situations. A wonderful way to cope with bereavement is to give of yourself in comforting others.

God's People Are Valued in Old Age

Though death takes away a beloved mate, God remains ever faithful, ever sure. "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple" (Psalms 27:4).

"Honor widows that are widows indeed" (1 Timothy 5:3), urges the apostle Paul. The direction that follows indicates that worthy widows without close relatives may have needed material support from the congregation. Nevertheless, the sense of the instruction to "honor" includes the idea of valuing them. "Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained by the world" (James 1:27). What a comfort to know that God values godly widows and widowers and will sustain!

God's inspired Word declares, "Gray hair is a crown of glory. It is attained by a life of righteousness" (Proverbs 16:31; 20:29). As an aside, Christ Himself is described as having hair white as wool (Revelation 1:13). How ironic that as older people begin to look more and more like Christ, many choose to hide their crown of glory by dyeing their hair dark!

The message of the Bible is, whether married or single once again, to keep God's service first in your life. You will thus have a good name with God now and the prospect of eternal life in God's Kingdom where the pains of old age will be no more (Psalm 37:3–5; Isaiah 65:20).

Yes, old age can be enjoyable. It can be a time of peace of mind, of contentment and happiness. Old age should bring with it wisdom and learning to adjust in matters of physical health and financial matters; mental and emotional attitudes will also help to that end. And, above all, faith in God and his Word, and trying to live up to its wise counsel, can aid you to enjoy old age.

SOME TIPS FOR STAYING YOUNGER LONGER

Think Young and Think Happy

This obviously rules out rocking away your last years of life on the front porch, oblivious to what is going on in the world. Keep up-to-date. Do not limit your associations to friends your own age group, with whom discussions may

tend to get bogged down in the latest obituary columns. Associate with young people, too. Listen to what they have to say. Learn about their problems. They will appreciate your interest and you will gain their respect. Besides, some of their youthful enthusiasm, cheerfulness and optimism is bound to rub off.

The unpleasant aspects of old age will not be improved by a disposition that has forgotten how to smile. Find joy in small things.

Keep Physically Active

Physical activity engaged in regularly, although in moderation, is essential. This strengthens the heart and lungs, keeps you trim and prevents muscles from sagging. Whatever your preference (some type of sport or simply taking long walks), you will be aided in staying physically active. The Bible says, "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and *if by reason of strength* they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away" (Psalms 90:10). This indicates that physical activity and strength are a determining factor in maintain one's health.

Exercise is particularly important if you have reached retirement age. Retirement should not mean inactivity. Keep busy, working at something that interests you.

Keep Mentally Active

Even as the body deteriorates when not used, so also does the mind. Enrich your life by increasing your knowledge. Play scrabble. Work crossword puzzles; work at strengthening your memory. Learn things you had no time or opportunity to learn earlier—a handicraft, a foreign language, or how to play a musical instrument. Did you know, for example, that over two million Americans over the age of 55 have returned to school, many of them now studying at colleges and universities? "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding" (Proverbs 4:7; 9:10).

Watch Eating and Drinking Habits

Eat sparingly on a low-calorie diet, such as those found in fruits, vegetables and grains, but low in sugars and fats. Read labels. To supplement nutritive needs, many persons find vitamins helpful. Research seems to indicate that vitamin E is especially effective in slowing down the aging process.

Remain as Independent as Possible

Do not let younger people, even if well meaning, set you back to the days of childhood by being overly protective and condescending in their dealings with you. If you can still live alone, do so. If you can still care for your home, do so. If you can still do your own cooking, do so. If you can still mow your own lawn and wash your own car, do so.

If, on the other hand, you have become dependent in either body or mind, accept help when offered, doing so graciously and with gratitude. Let people help you according to need, not according to age. In this way you will maintain self-respect and will have no reason to feel guilty about unduly imposing upon others.

Accept the Obvious

Make allowances for the fact that you are not as young as you used to be. But, then, who is? Do not feel you must keep up with others half your age. Don't let pride and vanity handicap you. There is no reason to "prove" you are still young when it is quite obvious that you are not. Grow older gracefully, with no apologies. It is what it is.

Never cease being grateful for the opportunity you have had to grow old. Millions of young persons, whose lives have been snuffed out prematurely, never had that chance.

Do Not Live in the Past

Treasured memories are fine, but keeping too many physical ties with the past, like old letters and pictures, or spending too much time reminiscing, can make you despondent and longing for "the good old days" that will never return. Rather than living in the past, come to grips with the present, while at the same time making plans for the future. Decide what you would like to do tomorrow or next week, and daily you will have something for which to live.

Look to the Future!

As bleak as the world news may be, we need to view world events from *God's* paradigm. Learn to think as God thinks (Philippians 2:5). Saturate your mind with Isaiah chapters 2 and 11; Ezekiel 37:15; Daniel 7:14–27; and Revelation 21 and 22. Think about God's plan for man as revealed through the Sabbath and Holy Days. Visualize the resurrections and the wonders God will bestow upon mankind. Indeed this is the Good News about the wonderful world tomorrow! For further enlightenment be sure to request our free booklets, *God's Seasonal Plan* and *The Second Coming and Beyond*. Look up the scriptures and prove all things by your own Bible (1 Thessalonians 5:21)!

Heeding these rules for healthy living will help assure that both you and your mate can enjoy life to the full as God intended as you grow older together.

Questions & Replies

by Vance A. Stinson

Are there any apostles and prophets today?

QUESTION: I was talking with a brother who, as a minister, was trying to convince me that there are no more apostles or prophets. It all stopped after the twelve disciples of Jesus.... Is this true?—*Orange, NJ*

REPLY: The answer depends largely on how we define “apostle” and “prophet.” The Twelve and Paul were apostles in a special sense. As men who had seen the risen Christ, making them eyewitnesses of the Resurrection, they were used in laying the foundation of the New Testament Church. Obviously, no one today walked the dusty roads of Nazareth with Jesus, heard His voice, enjoyed meals with Him, or witnessed His crucifixion. The Twelve did all these things, and they met with and were instructed by Christ after His resurrection. The word “apostle,” as it applied to them, was a *foundational office*. It cannot be repeated, for the foundation has already been laid. So, in the sense in which the Twelve were apostles, there are no living apostles today. However, insofar as the word “apostle” merely refers to a person sent with a message or on a mission, whether secular or religious, there may be many “apostles” today.

The term “prophet” also has more than one nuance of meaning. There were prophets who received direct revelation from God. In fact, in that sense, some of the apostles were prophets. This function, too, was foundational for the New Testament church. Paul had in view apostles and prophets as foundational offices/functions when he wrote:

“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the **foundation of the apostles and prophets**, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord” (Ephesians 2:19–21).

So in the foundational sense, there are no prophets today. But not all prophets in the New Testament church contributed to the original deposit of faith. Some prophets, such as the disciples Paul met in Tyre (Acts 21:4), the four virgin daughters of Philip (verse 9), and Agabus (verse 10), prophesied of events to come, but they apparently added nothing to the deposit of “the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). The true Faith, in its pristine purity and fullness, had already been “delivered to the saints” by the time these prophets came on the scene. So they were not prophets in the foundational sense.

Are there Agabus-like prophets today? I don’t know of any, but that doesn’t mean there are none. Revelation 11 seems to indicate God will use prophets before the close of the age. So does Acts 2:17–18 (RSV):

“And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters **shall prophesy**, and your young men shall **see visions**, and your old men shall **dream dreams**; yea, and on my menservants and my maidservants in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy” (see also Joel 2:28).

It is entirely possible that God has used prophets at various times in the past two millennia, is using them in certain places today, and will use them in the days ahead. But it’s important to understand that none of these have added, or will add, new revelation to the true Faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

The word “prophet” can also refer to an inspired preacher. The “prophet,” in this sense, is inspired of the Holy Spirit, but his inspired preaching does not necessarily involve foretelling future events; nor does it involve divine disclosures apart from what is already revealed in Scripture. Rather, it involves the ability to comprehend Scripture and expound its message clearly. Paul seems to have this sense of “prophesying” in mind in 1 Corinthians 14:3: “But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.”

When did Elijah write to Jehoram?

QUESTION: I read your brochure about Elijah [entitled *Is Elijah in Heaven* (code: ELH)].... Anyhow, I believe that he was transported to another place on the earth, but from what I can tell, there is no concrete proof. What was mentioned about Elijah writing Jehoram really doesn’t prove he was already taken up since that event seemed to happen during Jehoram’s reign. Why I say that is because the Bible is written in chronological order and Jehoshaphat died before Elijah was taken to heaven.... [W]hen Elijah was taken...Jehoram would have already

been king. Please let me know what you think.—*Joliet, IL*

REPLY: You stated your belief that Elijah “was transported to another place on this earth,” but added that “Elijah writing Jehoram really doesn’t prove he was already taken up since that event seemed to happen during Jehoram’s reign.” You mentioned that, according to the chronological order presented in the Bible, “Jehoshaphat died before Elijah was taken to heaven,” so “Jehoram would have already been king” by the time Elijah was taken up. This order of events is congruent with the view that Elijah wrote to King Jehoram *before* he was taken up in a whirlwind.

Please carefully reread 2 Kings 2–3. I believe you will find that the chronology you propose needs some revision.

In 2 Kings 2, Elijah is miraculously taken into heaven (the sky). Elisha succeeds him. In the next chapter, Jehoshaphat meets Elisha, so Jehoshaphat is obviously still alive *after* Elijah’s ascension. It seems, then, that Elijah ascended *during*, not *after*, the reign of Jehoshaphat.

However, there are some uncertainties regarding when Elijah wrote his letter to Jehoram. It is possible that there was a co-regency during which Jehoshaphat and his son Jehoram reigned at the same time. It was not unusual for a king to share his regal power with his son (or chosen successor) in order to legitimize the son’s reign in the event of the king’s death. This helped create a smooth transition once the old king died and his successor assumed power. It also helped prevent disputes over who was the rightful heir to the throne. If a co-regency did exist, it seems apparent that Jehoram was able, through subterfuge and secret plots, to conceal his wickedness from his father, for we can be certain that Jehoshaphat would not have shared power with Jehoram had he known just how corrupt he was. And if a co-regency did exist, Elijah could have written to Jehoram *before* being taken away.

If, however, Elijah’s letter to Jehoram (2 Chronicles 21:12–15) arrived *after* Jehoram succeeded Jehoshaphat as king, then this is evidence that Elijah had been transported to another place *on earth*. At best, though, it is secondary evidence. The primary evidence is in the brochure you referred to.

Is the Devil a woman? And...

Why did Paul think he had to keep the feast in Jerusalem?

QUESTION: I...was wondering if you could answer a couple questions for me. 1) I recently read an article that blew me away. It stated that the Dead Sea Scrolls depicted Satan as female and as a “temptress.” This is the first I ever heard of Satan being female and was wondering if you had an opinion. I did a quick Google search of my own and read some others apparently believe the same thing.... I was wondering how extant this belief really is. 2) There is a lot of talk by various COG churches that OT feasts should still be followed. I can’t remember the scripture...but Paul once stated that he needed to return to Jerusalem to attend the feast (Passover or Tabernacles, I don’t remember). My question is, if churches today keep this locally, why couldn’t Paul? Why go all the way to Jerusalem? And why didn’t he require, or at least ask, the local Christians to go to Jerusalem with him?—*Jacksonville, FL*

REPLY: I suspect relatively few believe Satan is a female, and I’m not sure that ancient sources that describe the Devil as a “temptress” were intended by their authors to be interpreted literally. Scripture reveals that angels are spirits (see Matthew 22:30; Hebrews 1:7, 14), not physical beings. Gender pertains to physicality. Angels and demons—spirits—are therefore sexless beings. Satan, a fallen angel, is neither male nor female. Those are categories that do not pertain to him, except perhaps metaphorically. The Bible always speaks of the devil in masculine terms, but such descriptions should be understood as anthropomorphisms.

For your second question, you probably have one or both of the following scriptures in mind:

Acts 20:16: “For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost.”

Acts 18:20–21: “When they asked him [Paul] to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent, but took leave of them, saying, ‘I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing.’ And he sailed from Ephesus.”

You asked, “If churches today keep this locally, why couldn’t Paul? Why go all the way to Jerusalem? And why didn’t he require, or at least ask, the local Christians to go to Jerusalem with him?”

The churches *back then* kept the feasts locally, though many Jewish believers continued their custom of going to Jerusalem for the pilgrimage feasts and participating in sacrifices and offerings alongside other Jews. However, many Jews (including believers in the Messiah) who lived far away from Jerusalem were unable to make the journey. They kept the high days in their local areas, but did not offer sacrifices. No doubt, the many scattered house churches (consisting of Jews and Gentiles) did the same thing.

Paul was warned by prophets *not* to go to Jerusalem (Acts 21:4, 10–12). The message was told to Paul “through the Spirit,” so it obviously would not have

been wrong if Paul had chosen not to go on to Jerusalem. He could have kept the feast at Ephesus or one of the other places he visited. Many believers—especially Jewish believers—*would* be going to Jerusalem for the feast, but many would not. They would keep the feast in their local areas. Under the Mosaic Covenant, the Israelites were to keep the pilgrimage feasts in the place where God had “put His name” primarily because that’s the place where they were to bring their sacrifices and offerings. The temple—the place of God’s special presence—was the *only* place the Israelites could lawfully offer sacrifices, but if they could not get to Jerusalem, they still kept the feasts (without sacrifices) in their local areas.

Paul apparently wanted to keep the feast in Jerusalem because he knew a large number of Jewish believers would be there, and he would have the opportunity to put to rest some of the rumors they had heard about him. Perhaps he also knew that it would be a good time to meet with other apostles and elders, since many of them would be in Jerusalem for the feast. He could report on the progress of his ministry, hear from them on their ministries, and set the record straight regarding rumors from the circumcision party. (Please read Acts 21:15-24.) He may have also had in mind winning some of his kinsmen to the Faith (Romans 10:1; 1 Corinthians 9:19–23).

What about dinosaurs and cavemen?

QUESTION: I have a question that has been perplexing me lately. The question is: Did dinosaurs and cavemen really exist or are they some of the myths of evolution? I have read that no cavemen bones have ever been found and the bones that have been purported to be those of cavemen were either simply a man’s bone or an ape’s. I do not believe in evolution or cavemen. But dinosaurs, huge birds with awesome wing spans, etc., remain a mystery to me. Have dinosaur bones actually been found or is this just another joke? If dinosaurs did exist, were they created and on the earth millions or billions of years before man or were they created when man was? I understand Genesis 1 where it is stated that the earth was (or became) without form and void. Was there an original creation of the earth, including dinosaurs and other prehistoric creatures...? Were there two creations, one billions of years ago and a re-creation of the earth when man was formed only six thousand years or so ago? What caused the earth to become without form and void? God would not have created it that way. Was it asteroids or could there have been a great spiritual battle between God and His angels and Lucifer and his angels? Needless to say, the incredible power involved in such a struggle would have been unimaginable and wreaked the greatest havoc.... I look forward to hearing from you.—*Ashcamp, KY*

REPLY: Yes, there were (and *are*) cavemen. But they were not (and are not) some subhuman species. They were (and are) simply human beings who dwell in caves. The “Ascent of Man” pictorial all of us have seen doesn’t have a shred of evidence to support it. No, we did not evolve from ape-like creatures. Some of the past claims regarding discoveries of bones belonging to pre-human creatures have been exposed as frauds. And some, such as those belonging to the creatures that have been labeled “Neanderthals,” were the bones of humans. The Neanderthals may have had distinctive racial features, just as the different races today do, but they were nonetheless human. DNA studies said to indicate Neanderthals were not human have no scientific justification. In recent years, a 13-year study of remains of Neanderthals unearthed in France led scientists to conclude that they were sophisticated enough to bury their dead, apparently with some sort of burial ritual. They also used tools and apparently had a complex social structure. *They were human!*

It is an indisputable fact that dinosaurs and other prehistoric creatures existed. Many young-earth creationists claim that God created them in the same week He created man. But the fossil record clearly indicates that they died out long before God put man on this planet. The Genesis account of creation is written in such a way as to allow for a large “gap,” or undefined interval, between the time the universe began to exist and the time the Spirit is found hovering over the face of the waters (Genesis 1:2). Genesis 1:1 tells us that God created the universe, but it does not tell us how long the creation process went on. Verse 2 tells us the “earth”—the *land*—was “without form and void.” This simply means it was not a suitable environment for humans. The same expression is used in Jeremiah 4:23 and refers to the condition of a land in the wake of divine wrath brought upon a sinful nation. So God *could* have caused the condition of Genesis 1:2, or He could have simply *permitted* it. We have traditionally accepted the view that the condition resulted from Lucifer’s rebellion. That may be true. But, either way, Genesis 1:1-2 is stated in such a way as to allow for what science affirms: that the planet we call “Earth” was already very old and had gone through massive upheavals—floods, intense volcanic activity, collisions with asteroids, etc.—by the time man first appeared.

At some point, perhaps billions of years after God brought the universe into existence, He set out to turn this uninhabitable wilderness called “the earth” (the Hebrew word can be translated “land” and may refer to a particular region) into a suitable environment for human beings. That’s what the six days of Genesis 1 are about. God “made” the earth and the sea and the heavens in six days in the sense that He transformed them in such a way as to create an environment for Adam and Eve and their descendants.

In summary, we don’t know when creation *ex nihilo* (creation out of nothing) occurred, but it was probably many billions of years ago. But the “creation” of an environment suitable for human beings was a separate event, and while gaps in the biblical genealogical tables make it impossible to determine for sure when the creation of man occurred, we know it was thousands, not millions, of years ago.

Did Jesus and the Disciples Keep the Statutory Passover in the night of Nisan 14?

QUESTION: It is absolutely beyond dispute that Jesus and His disciples kept the Passover in the night of Nisan 14. Doesn’t the fact that Jesus Himself kept the Passover on this night prove that the Passover lambs were to be killed in the beginning of the 14th at (or just after) sunset, and not in the latter part of the 14th?

REPLY: Jesus and His disciples had a Passover meal in the night of Nisan 14. By that time, Nisan 14 was considered the “first day of Unleavened Bread” (Mark 14:12). The Feast of Unleavened Bread itself was “called Passover” (Luke 22:1). Jesus and His disciples did not eat the Passover proper that night. They ate a Passover *meal*, as the festival called “Passover” had begun. The 14th was considered the “first day of the feast” because that was the day the people completed preparations for the events of the next evening and the week-long festival that would follow. So, yes, Jesus, His disciples, and the Jews in general began “keeping the Passover” as soon as the first day (Nisan 14) of the Passover festival began. But this does *not* mean they were keeping the **statutory** Passover described in Leviticus 23 and other Old Testament passages.

The disciples asked Jesus, “Where do you want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover [meal]?” (Matthew 26:17). It is possible that there was a customary “Passover” meal on that night, since it was considered the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, or first day of the Passover festival. The disciples are asking, “Where will we be eating the customary Passover meal this year?”

Jesus told them to go to a certain place and tell a certain man, “The teacher says, ‘My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover [custom] at your house with my disciples.’ So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover [meal]” (v. 18). Keeping this Passover custom was a part of “keeping the Passover (festival).” Jesus, having kept the Passover festival with all the legitimate traditional customs associated with it, and knowing this was His last Passover meal with His disciples, said, “With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover [meal] with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God” (Luke 22:15–16). Does this mean that when the Kingdom of God is established on this earth, Christ and His disciples kill and eat a Passover lamb? No! For the Israelites, the Passover festival pictured liberation from bondage in Egypt. For Christ’s followers, it pictures liberation from the bondage of sin, the world, Satan, and death. Its ultimate fulfillment will be realized when the Kingdom of God is established on earth. Christ is referring to the great Messianic Banquet celebrating God’s triumph over sin and death through Christ.

Perhaps the “Passover” references pertain, in part, to the **statutory** Passover the following day. When Christ sent the disciples to “prepare the Passover,” they may have understood Him to mean they were to prepare a place where they could keep the Passover (eat the Passover lamb) the next night. Jesus would proceed with plans to “keep the Passover” at a certain house with His disciples. Jesus and His disciples did “keep the Passover” at that house in the sense that they began observance of the Passover festival there. But the disciples may well have taken Jesus’ words to mean that He and His disciples would keep the Passover (eat the lamb) the next night at the place where Passover arrangements had been made. Finally, when Jesus said, “With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer,” it is possible that He was speaking of the Passover meal they would have had, under normal circumstances, the following night. This is supported by the next statement: “for I tell you **I shall not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God**” (RSV). In short, Jesus may have been saying, “I greatly desired to have one more Passover with you, but it’s not going to happen—My time is at hand; I’ll be dead by this time tomorrow evening.”

In His references to the commencement of the Passover festival, the sacrifice scheduled for the following day, and the celebration set for the next night, Jesus was linking Himself to the Passover and affirming His role as the true Lamb of God whose sacrifice would provide deliverance from sin and death for everyone who believes. He would indeed “keep the Passover” that very night, beginning with Judas’ betrayal and the suffering that would follow shortly thereafter. He would “keep” it until He *fulfilled* it in His substitutionary death the next day.

It is doubtful that Christ and His disciples had the statutory Passover in the night of Nisan 14. The “first day of Unleavened Bread”—Nisan 14—was just beginning or so near that the Synoptic writers spoke of it as if it had already begun. It is unlikely that they would have just then made preparations. Further, if they killed a lamb at sunset, as the 14th began, it would have taken four or five hours to roast. There is no mention of killing or roasting a lamb, and a small

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lamb that would not take as much time would not be enough for twelve men. So if they killed a lamb at 6:00 p.m., they would have sat down to eat it within a couple of hours of midnight. That is unlikely, because Matthew tells us, “When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve” and began eating (26:20–21). This suggests that the meal began early in the night. There is no mention of eating lamb, and no mention of burning the remainders. And, if this was the statutory Passover, it seems odd that the disciples’ families were not present, for the Passover was a time when families customarily came together.

Did the Israelites leave their homes the same night the firstborn of Egypt were killed?

QUESTION: When God gave the Israelites instructions on keeping the Passover, He explicitly commanded the Israelites *not* to leave their homes before morning. The Bible says the Israelites left “by night,” but it could not have been the same night the death angel struck the firstborn of Egypt, for then they would be disobeying God’s command to stay indoors that night. Yet, you say it was! How do you explain this?

REPLY: Even if the Israelites had left their homes before daybreak on the 15th, it was because they were *forced* to leave at that time. Nevertheless, I’m quite sure they began their journey in broad daylight, not at night! To be sure, I am convinced that the death angel struck the firstborn at about midnight on the 15th, and I am just as certain that the Israelites began moving out of Rameses on the 15th, but I do not believe they left their homes before sunrise.

Numbers 33 tells us that the Israelites “departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the day after the Passover the children of Israel went out with boldness in the sight of all the Egyptians. For the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn, whom the LORD had killed among them” (verses 3–4).

In normal usage, the “day after” a night-time event is the next daylight portion following that night-time event. The children of Israel did not wait until the end of the 15th to begin their exit from Egypt; they began their journey as soon as possible in the morning hours. They left “in the sight of all the Egyptians,” who were “burying all their firstborn.” That doesn’t sound like a nighttime event. People do not ordinarily bury their dead at night.

But what about Deuteronomy 16:1, which states that “in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt **by night**”? As noted above, Numbers 33 seems to say that the Israelites departed Rameses in broad daylight. What, then, does Deuteronomy 16:1 mean?

Notice that this verse does not say the Israelites “left their homes” by night. Nor does it say they “departed from Rameses” by night. It *does* say that “in the month of Abib the LORD your God **BROUGHT YOU OUT OF EGYPT** by night.” If this verse refers to the time the Israelites began their journey, then it obviously cannot be taken in the full literal sense, because the Israelites were *still in Egyptian territory* several days later. God had not yet literally brought them out of the land of Egypt.

This verse can be understood two ways: literally or figuratively. If we take it literally, then it must be a reference to the night the Israelites left Egyptian territory by passing through the Red Sea (Exodus 21:14–26). That night, the Lord miraculously delivered them from the pursuing Egyptian army, literally bringing them out of Egypt and into the wilderness by night.

If the verse is to be understood figuratively, then it obviously refers to what God did (“by night”) that *caused* the exodus from Egypt. The emphasis of Deuteronomy 16:1 is on what “the LORD your God” did, not the time of day Israel began their departure from Egypt. His act of killing the firstborn was the cause of Israel’s release (that same night) and ultimate departure from Egypt.

Is there a solution to the Passover controversy?

QUESTION: Many in the Church of God believe the command to kill the Passover lambs “on the fourteenth day of the month at even” means the lambs were to be killed between sunset and nightfall—the period called “dusk,” or “twilight”—at the beginning of the 14th. The Jews say the correct time to kill the lambs is in the afternoon—between noon and sunset—of the 14th. Who is right?

REPLY: We could debate the primitive meaning of *erev* and *ben ha-’arbayim* (the Hebrew terms translated “even,” “evening,” “twilight,” etc.) from now on, but there would still be disagreement, not only among church members but also among scholars who have examined this subject. Let’s not waste our time rehashing and reinterpreting the data on these terms. Rather, let’s go to the crux of the matter—the undeniable facts that should finally answer the question of whether the Passover lambs were to be sacrificed during the narrow window (between sunset and nightfall) at the beginning of the 14th, or during the declining hours of the daylight portion of the 14th. Here are the facts and the only logical conclusion we can come to once we accept them:

Fact # 1: Domestic sacrifices were strictly forbidden. The blood of all animal sacrifices was to be sprinkled or poured on the altar at the tabernacle/temple.

Leviticus 17:3–6: “Whatever man of the house of Israel who kills an ox or lamb or goat in the camp, or who kills *it* outside the camp, and does not bring it to the door of the tabernacle of meeting to offer an offering to the LORD before the tabernacle of the LORD, the guilt of bloodshed shall be imputed to that man. He has shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people, to the end that the children of Israel may bring their sacrifices which they offer in the open field, that they may bring them to the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, to the priest, and offer them *as* peace offerings to the LORD. And the priest shall sprinkle the blood on the altar of the LORD *at* the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and burn the fat for a sweet aroma to the LORD.”

Deuteronomy 12:21–27: “If the place where the LORD your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, then you may slaughter from your herd and from your flock which the LORD has given you, just as I have commanded you, and you may eat within your gates as much as your heart desires. Just as the gazelle and the deer are eaten, so you may eat them; the unclean and the clean alike may eat them. Only be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood is the life; you may not eat the life with the meat. You shall not eat it; you shall pour it on the earth like water. You shall not eat it, that it may go well with you and your children after you, when you do what is right in the sight of the LORD. Only the holy things which you have, and your vowed offerings, you shall take and go to the place which the LORD chooses. And you shall offer your burnt offerings, the meat and the blood, on the altar of the LORD your God; and the blood of your sacrifices shall be poured out on the altar of the LORD your God, and you shall eat the meat.”

Fact #2: The Passover sacrifice (after Egypt) was not an exception. The sacrifice was “brought,” “presented,” “offered.” It is called “the offering of the LORD” and “My sacrifice.” We must not read our experience of “coming before the Lord” on the Sabbath day or “taking up an offering” on a holy day into these passages.

Exodus 23:17–18: “Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD. You shall not **offer** the blood of My [Passover] sacrifice with leavened bread; nor shall the fat of My sacrifice remain until morning.”

Exodus 34:24–25: “For I will cast out the nations before you and enlarge your borders; neither will any man covet your land when you go up to appear before the LORD your God three times in the year. You shall not **offer** the blood of My sacrifice with leaven, nor shall the sacrifice of the Feast of the Passover be left until morning.”

Numbers 9:7, 13: “And those men said to him, ‘We became defiled by a human corpse. Why are we kept from **presenting the offering of the LORD** at its appointed time among the children of Israel?’.... But the man who *is* clean and is not on a journey, and ceases to keep the Passover, that same person shall be cut off from among his people, because he did not **bring the offering of the LORD** at its appointed time; that man shall bear his sin.”

Fact #3: Examples of righteous kings restoring true worship confirm the Passover as a temple-centered sacrifice. Their reforms were based on the Law of Moses, not some later tradition that has no biblical warrant.

2 Chronicles 35:1, 6, 11, 14: “Now Josiah kept a Passover to the LORD in Jerusalem, and they slaughtered the Passover lambs **on the fourteenth day of the first month**.... [He ordered the Levites to] slaughter the Passover offerings, consecrate yourselves, and prepare *them* for your brethren, that *they* may **do according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses**.... And they slaughtered the Passover offerings; and the priests sprinkled *the blood* with their hands, while the Levites skinned the animals.... Then afterward they prepared portions for themselves and for the priests, because the priests, the sons of Aaron, *were busy* in offering burnt offerings and fat **until night**....”¹

2 Chronicles 30:1–3, 15–20: “And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should **come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover** to the LORD God of Israel. For the king and his leaders and all the assembly in Jerusalem had agreed to keep the Passover in the second month. For they **could not keep it at the regular time, because a sufficient number of priests had not consecrated themselves, nor had the people gathered together at Jerusalem**.... Then they slaughtered the Passover lambs on the fourteenth *day* of the second month. The priests and the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought the burnt offer-

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¹ There can be no doubt that the Passover lambs were killed *before* nightfall. Given the great number of sacrifices (more than 37,000; see vv. 7–9), it is clear that the sacrifice began before sunset “on the fourteenth day of the first month.” If it had begun at or shortly after sunset, the event would have continued well after midnight, perhaps into the early morning hours, which would be much too late if participants were to burn the remainders by morning.

In Loving Memory

Margie Marang

Margie Lou (Fortner) Marang, of Windsor Place in Coffeyville, KS passed away on Sunday, March 9, 2014. She was 87 years old. Margie was born on January 27, 1927, to Richard Virgil and Emma Jane (Loggan) Fortner in Arkansas City, KS. The family later moved to Coffeyville where her parents ran a pie business out of their home supplying most of the local restaurants with homemade pies. She grew up in Coffeyville graduating from Field Kindley High School in 1946. Two weeks after graduation, Margie married the love of her life and boy next door, Frank A. Marang, Jr. They were happily married until Frank's death in November 2011.



Margie Marang

Frank and Margie would have three children, Kim, Karla, and Kent. Margie was homemaker and was very active in PTA, Girl Scouts, 4-H, the March of Dimes, and the Summer Theater in Coffeyville. Her hobbies included sewing, cooking, gardening, and writing. She was a member of the Night Writers Authors Club for many years. In 2009 she realized a life-long dream when her book of original poems was published. Margie also worked for Meals-on-Wheels, and as a tour guide at the Brown Mansion.

She was preceded in death by her parents, one sister, Betty Jane (Fortner) Provorse; one brother, Richard Virgil Fortner, Jr.; and her husband of 65 years, Frank.

She is survived by her three children, Kim Jones and husband Sherman of South Coffeyville, OK; Karla Thomsen of Coffeyville; and Kent Marang and wife Linda of Coffeyville; nine grandchildren, 19 great-grandchildren, and numerous nieces and nephews. She was loved by all.

Services were on Friday, March 21, 2014, at Grace Fellowship in Coffeyville. Burial was in Restlawn Memorial Park.

Frank and Margie were longtime members of the Church of God and will be remembered by many.

If you were ever lucky enough to spend a Feast of Tabernacles with them, you'll probably remember Frank's serenades to Margie during the fun shows. It was always a treat to watch and listen as he would sing to her and she would sing back. And they sang to each other every feast right up until just a year or so before Frank's passing!

We will miss you Margie (and Frank)!



Margie & Frank in September 2010

Carol McPherson

Etta Caroline (Warburton) McPherson of Garland, Texas passed away at her home on April 24, 2014 at the age of 92. She was born in Cowley County, Kansas to Clifford E. Warburton and Lora A. Meadows Warburton on April 7, 1922. She was married to Jack Kay McPherson on June 29, 1948.

Funeral services were held on Wednesday, April 30, 2014 at Labby Memorial Funeral Home in Leesville, Louisiana, with Charles Groce officiating. Interment was at Beckom Cemetery in Hornbeck, Louisiana under the direction of Labby Memorial Funeral Home of Leesville.

Carol was preceded in death by her parents; her sisters, Rose L. Grantham, Ardith E. Grantham Miller, and Cecile E. Warburton McPherson; her brothers, Robert B. Grantham Jr. and Joseph F. Miller; and her daughter Kathy C. McPherson.

Survivors include her husband Jack; her sons, Thomas I. Coffman Jr. (wife Francis) and Terry A. McPherson; daughter, Candy K. Finley (husband Bill); brother, Rex B. Grantham; sister, Bonnie K. Grantham Patterson; nine grandchildren; thirteen great-grandchildren; and numerous nieces and nephews.

Carol was a longtime member of the Church of God International, attending congregations in Anacoco, Louisiana and Tyler, Texas. In past years she was helpful in assisting with the CGI youth camp. She was always known for her willingness to serve.

She was a devoted wife, mother, grandmother, and friend to everyone she met. She led a full life that included caring for her family and those she adopted as family along the way. She would spend countless hours baking, sewing, cro-



Carol McPherson

cheting, gardening and looking after whatever "pets" she had adopted under her care at any given time. She would share anything she had to offer with you and never met a stranger. She lived in numerous places across the United States and overseas. She will be missed by all who knew her and loved forever for her many contributions to our lives.

2014 Infuse Retreat

THURSDAY, JULY 24, 2014 through SUNDAY, JULY 27, 2014

Get your passports ready! Join us for the annual young adult INFUSE retreat, held for the first time outside of the USA in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. This year's theme:

'Til Kingdom Come'



Lots of social events and activities planned! So come on out and **fellowship** and **connect** to apply God's Word in our daily living through seminars and discussions. Get involved in the

community and **serve others** by helping out with the volunteer service project.

 Find us on Facebook: Infuse Retreat 2014

For more information or travel/lodging assistance, please contact

sheysmith@torontocgi.org



www.infusecgi.org
www.cgi.org

Man of God

A poem by Phyllis Benner of the London, Ontario CGI congregation

Man of Strength
Powerful...

With feeling you subdue,
Yet, not subdued,
By those untrue.

Master of Yourself
Solid Rock...

Bearing hopeless trials,
Yet, remaining silent
To never tell the crowd.

Man of Composure
Piety...

When insults make you pale,

Replying, quietly
Appeasing those who rail.

Man of Power
Sensitive...

With indignation be provoked,
Yet, can restrain
And then forgive.

Man of Strong Passions
Chaste...

In anguish you stand,
You, give me strength
To face the world.

Submitted by Lu Copeland

ings to the house of the LORD. They stood in their place according to their custom, according to the Law of Moses the man of God; the priests sprinkled the blood received from the hand of the Levites. **For there were many in the assembly who had not sanctified themselves; therefore the Levites had charge of the slaughter of the Passover lambs for everyone who was not clean, to sanctify them to the LORD.** For a multitude of the people, many from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet they ate the Passover contrary to what was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, 'May the good LORD provide atonement for everyone who prepares his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though he *is* not cleansed according to the **purification of the sanctuary.**' And the LORD listened to Hezekiah and healed the people."

Now, having established that the Passover, as a commemoration of what God did for Israel in Egypt, was a temple-centered sacrifice, and that domestic Passover sacrifices were strictly forbidden under the Mosaic Covenant, let's see why an early-14th sacrifice is simply impossible.

Many within the Church of God groups believe that some 2 to 3 million Israelites came out of Egypt. (This estimate is based on Exodus 12:37, though some scholars believe an alternative translation of this verse puts the figure at about 6,000, including women, children, and the "mixed multitude.") Let's assume that 2 million people exited Egypt and kept the Passover in the second year in the wilderness. We'll also assume that one Passover lamb for every ten people was offered. That would be 200,000 animals. Remember, the sacrifices were to be brought *on* the 14th and *within* the interval indicated by *ben ha-'arbayim*. Remember also that the blood had to be poured on the altar; it could not just be thrown at the tabernacle. So, assuming an early-14th Passover, here's the scenario: As soon as the sun disappears and the 14th begins, those 200,000 Passovers are killed. Killing the animals and collecting the blood in a basin (assuming that's the way it was done) shouldn't take more than a few minutes if each man killed his own animal. Now it's time to offer the blood on the altar. Let's say that they were able to do 50 per second. That would be the blood of 3,000 animals per minute, or 180,000 per hour, being poured, sprinkled, or thrown on the altar. At that rate, the job would take slightly less than one hour and fifteen minutes. All they would have to do would be sustain the rate of 50 per second. Then the Israelites could get on with the task of roasting their ani-

mals. The families of the last folks in line would be putting their lambs on the table by about 2:00 a.m.—*if* they were camped fairly close to the tabernacle.

Now, if the people are obedient to the Covenant, then God will multiply them greatly, which means there will eventually be *millions* of Passover sacrifices offered at the temple within that narrow "twilight" period at the beginning of Nisan 14. This means, of course, that they're going to have to figure out a way to exceed the 50-per-second rate for those Passover sacrifices if they're going to accomplish the task within the designated timeframe.

Many have struggled with the Passover issue. So have I, but my struggle is different from theirs. I struggle with *how on earth the Israelites could have done all that in a single afternoon!* By the time of Jesus they obviously had to have a highly organized system—especially if Josephus' claim (no fewer than 3 million Passover lambs each year) is correct.

Let's see if we can relate to this by using a modern example: An average football stadium holds about 80,000 people. They start filing in through multiple gates some two to three hours before the game starts, and often there are still lines at the gate after kickoff time.

Do you see why early-14th proponents insist on a "domestic Passover"? That's the *only way* so many animals could be sacrificed within the narrow twilight period at the beginning of the 14th. The only other way one could connect the Passover sacrifice to the beginning of the 14th would be to have the slaughter of the animals begin in the afternoon of the 13th. Unfortunately, Scripture never mentions the 13th in relation to Passover observance. So, clearly, the late-14th view is the only one that meets all the scriptural specifications.

Fall Holydays 2014

Feast of Trumpets: September 25

Day of Atonement: October 4

Feast of Tabernacles: October 9–15

Last Great Day: October 16



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