

Magazine

Crucifixion of Christ Incorrectly Portrayed?

Larry Ray Hafley

“Image of Jesus’ crucifixion may be wrong, says study.”

PARIS (AFP) — The image of the crucifixion, one of the most powerful emblems of Christianity, may be quite erroneous, according to a study which says there is no evidence to prove Jesus was crucified in this manner. Around the world, in churches, on the walls of Christian homes, on crucifixes worn as pendants, in innumerable books, paintings and movies, Jesus Christ is seen nailed to the cross by his hands and feet, with his head upwards and arms outstretched.

But a paper published by Britain’s prestigious Royal Society of Medicine (RSM) says this image has never been substantiated in fact. Christ could have been crucified in any one of many ways, all of which would have affected the causes of his death, it says. “The evidence available demonstrates that people were crucified in different postures and affixed to crosses using a variety of means,” said one of the authors, Piers Mitchell of Imperial College London. “Victims were not necessarily positioned head up and nailed through the feet from front to back, as is the imagery in Christian churches.”

The authors do not express any doubt on the act of Jesus’ crucifixion itself. But they note that the few eyewitness descriptions available today of crucifixions in the first century A.D. show the Romans had a broad and cruel

imagination. Their crucifixion methods probably evolved over time and depended on the social status of the victim and on the crime he allegedly committed, says the paper in April issue of the RSM journal.

The cross could be erected “in any one of a range of orientations,” with the victim sometimes head-up, sometimes head-down or in different postures. Sometimes he was nailed to the cross by his genitals, sometimes the hands and feet were attached to the side of the cross and not the front, or affixed with cords rather than nails.

Scripture shows that Jesus was indeed crucified in the very form and image in which his crucifixion typically is portrayed.

If crucified head-up, the victim’s weight may also have been supported on a small seat. This was believed to prolong the time it took a man to die, says the study, co-authored by Matthew Masien, also of Imperial College London’s medicine faculty.

Crucifixion was widely practised by the Romans to punish criminals and rebels, but if the empire ever circulated instructions for the soldiers who carried out the gruesome task, none has survived today.

Nor is there any detailed account of the method of Jesus’ crucifixion in the four Gospels of the Bible (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) which are believed to be near contemporary accounts of the life of Christ. . . . Given

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Manuscripts should be sent to Mike Willis, 6567 Kings Ct., Avon, IN 46123, (317) 272-6520. E-mail: mikewillis1@indy.rr.com.

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The Babe's Dependence Upon God

Mike Willis

The twenty-second psalm is sometimes called the "Psalm of the Cross" because Jesus quoted from it while he hung there: "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Ps. 22:1; cf. Matt. 27:46). The Lord quoted Psalm 22:1 while he hung on the cross, but there are several other statements about the cross that are recorded in the psalm, such as:

- Jesus' thirst on the cross: "My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death" (22:15).
Jesus' side being pierced: "For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet" (22:16).
The soldiers casting lots for his garments: "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture" (22:18).

Jesus could not control some of the events foretold in the psalm, such as his being pierced and the soldiers casting lots for his garments. These passages were fulfilled in ways beyond human control.

In addition to the events of the cross, the psalm also speaks about Jesus trusting in God while yet a baby. He said, "But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly" (22:9-10). This statement recalls the circumstances surrounding Jesus' birth.

Matthew relates the story of Jesus being born in Bethlehem. The wise men (magi) from the East saw Jesus' star and journeyed to Jerusalem to worship him. When they arrived in Jerusaelm, they asked Herod the Great, who was reigning as king saying, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him" (Matt. 2:2). Herod gathered the priests and scribes together to see what the Scriptures said about the birthplace of the Messiah. They concluded from the prophecy in Micah 5:2 that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Herod asked the wise men to return to Jerusalem and tell him where the child was so that he could worship him also. The wise men departed to

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Search For the Truth

Kech Lynn

I was raised in an Episcopalian family, and as a teenager I attended a Baptist church. As a young adult I was a Seventh Day Adventist for a time, and later became a Methodist. I always believed in God and in Jesus his Son. For as long as I can remember, I prayed to God.

While I was a sporadic-attending Methodist, a “spiritualist” friend told me from John 14:6: “Jesus said, no man comes to the father except through the Son.” He explained that Jesus himself wasn’t as important as Jesus’ message. According to him, the meaning of the passage was that we are all sons of God and that we must accept our “Sonship,” realizing that God loves us no matter what.

Down a Misguided Path

At the time, that seemed to make sense to me. I started down a path that I now see as a form of subjective spiritualism. Then, one day, when casually reading through the Bible (for what reason I do not know), I came across John 14:6: “Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” I recognized the passage as the one that my friend had told me about. But I also saw that Jesus did not say, no man comes to the Father, but through the Son; rather, he said no one comes to the Father except through me!

At that point I realized I had been duped! Jesus was important, but the theological baggage that went with the “Sonship” rhetoric was not in the passage. I became angry. Not with my friend, because he was just ignorant. But I became angry at myself because I took somebody else’s word for what Jesus said, instead of reading it myself.

Thinking For Myself

My irritation motivated me. That weekend, I took out my yellow legal pad, and read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. I wanted to see for myself what Jesus said. As I read the gospels, I took notes on everything that Jesus said.

That weekend of reading changed me. I decided that the Bible was true (John 7:17), that it was the word of God, and that I would lead my family in whatever direction it took us. I also developed a hunger for the word. I couldn’t get enough of it.

I eagerly went back to the Methodist church where we were members and had a meeting with “the pastor.” I told him I had been reading the Bible, that
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I thought it was true, and that I was ready to work to help the church. After all, this Methodist Church's "mission statement" defined it as a "biblically based" church. My wife, Heather, joined the choir and I joined several of the "men's ministries." To say the least, we were quite involved.

A Bold Challenge!

Soon thereafter, Billy Graham came to town for a Crusade. The Methodist church, along with many other denominational groups in the city, was involved in promoting it. I participated in this effort as well, attending workshops to learn how to be a "counselor" for those who would "come forward." The Crusade finally came (in November 2000), and I went. As I was walking into the stadium amidst 80,000 other people, I noticed in the distance someone holding a sign. It read: "Graham leads to Hell." Under the message was an 800 number. I thought to myself: "What is this joker doing here? He's not welcome here!" I put the sign out of mind and went into the concert/Crusade.

Several hours later, while exiting the stadium, I noticed that the guy with the sign was still there. I thought to myself, "this guy just doesn't get it." But it also occurred to me that this person must be taking some pretty intense heat from those who had attended the crusade. I started to wonder what this man had to say. So, to the horror of my wife, I wrote down the 800 number. As soon as I got home, I called the number and a recording led me to a web site. The site pointed out the differences between Billy Graham's doctrine and what the Bible actually said. I immediately thought back to my experience of misunderstanding John 14:6.

Digging Deeper

After reading a short time on this web site, and on some of the links it provided, I realized that Billy Graham was teaching people that they could be saved in a way that couldn't be found in the Bible (that is, by saying "the sinner's prayer"). I was amazed to discover that there was enormous amount of Bible study information on the Internet. Having a number for the word of God, I began seeking out and reading various web sites.

I am sure there is more false teaching on the Internet than true, but, thank God, I stumbled on to Steve Rudd's excellent side www.bible.ca. I will always be thankful for Steve and the work he does. This huge web site contains a wealth of information. I studied on it for month after month. I began to realize that you can read about a particular church in the Bible, the one Jesus built. This presented a problem for me, because I was still attending the Methodist church, and increasingly I was scrutinizing everything that happened there through the lens of the Bible. It was obvious to me that the preaching was more "social commentary" and "pep talks" than serious Bible study. In fact, the Sunday class had little to do with Bible study.

After a while, realizing this church was nothing like the one I was reading about in the Bible, we quit attending. Sometime later, the "associate pastor" called me and wanted to know where we had been. I asked him a whole litany of questions, such as: Why do we speak in tongues on Wednesday night, but not on Sunday morning? And why don't we follow the rules about speaking in tongues set forth in the Bible? And why do we take the Lord's supper on Wednesday night, when there's only a handful of us, and not on Sunday. Over and over, I asked why we don't do things the way they did in the Bible. The "associate pastor" had no satisfactory answers, so I told him in conclusion that I was going to look for a church like the one I was reading about in the Bible. He told me, "You're not going to find anything like that anymore."

Getting Bible Answers

I began to think he might be right. After several months of visiting churches, and always finding them to be unlike the church I was reading about in the Bible, my wife and I were very discouraged. One Sunday, after visiting another denominational service, I told my wife that I could not attend there again. We both broke into tears. In frustration, she asked, "Well, what are we going to do?" I sure didn't know. But I found two verses in Proverbs 3:5-6 that I read to her: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." I said, "That's what we are going to do. We're going to trust in the Lord to direct our path."

Sometime later, while studying on www.bible.ca, I noticed an icon on the left hand side of the home page that read: "Assembly locations of Christians near you." I clicked on it and up came the address of the "South Jacksonville church of Christ" on Parental Home Road just a few minutes from my house. The next day I attended the Wednesday night Bible study alone (my wife wasn't up for any more church shopping).

When the service was over, a man sitting behind me, shook my hand and introduced himself. Not wanting to attend for several months to discern what kind of church this was, I started firing off questions. After each of my questions, Rob Fox (one of the elders) directed me to the Bible passage. He never told me "what he believed," or "what the church believed," or "what he thought," or "his opinion." Over and over, he said, "Let's see what the Bible says." And then he would turn to a passage.

I obeyed the gospel several months later, and for almost three years now I have had the privilege of preaching it, along with Harold Dowdy and Ed Harrell, from the pulpit of the South Jacksonville Church of Christ on Parental Home Road in Jacksonville. I almost always introduce my sermons with a preamble that goes something like this:

All Kind of Prophets

Stan W. Adams

It is obvious, when reading and studying the Old Testament that God utilized the talents of many men of varying backgrounds and temperaments. They all had one thing in common and that was their resolve to say what God told them to say, without fear or favor of men. The young prophet told Jeroboam that, even though he offered him half of his house, he would not go against God's commandments to him (1 Kings 13:8-10). The sad thing is that he was later deceived by an older prophet who had to know better than to lie to the young man. This deception by the older prophet led to the death of the young prophet. God will not tolerate disobedience in his prophets or his people. Punishment and problems accompany disobedience. In this text we have a good prophet and a deceptive prophet. The good prophet became a disobedient prophet when he trusted in the person of the old prophet over God's word. The same can happen to us today. Paul admonished the Corinthians not to follow after men in 1 Corinthians 1:12-31.

Micaiah was a true prophet of God, who told king Ahab what he needed to hear, even though he was belittled and badgered and disrespected for doing so. Elijah was a prophet with strong language and tactics. Elisha was also very forthright and outspoken. Each of these prophets and others were chosen by God to carry his message to dying men. It is interesting that there does not seem to be any jealousy or party spirit in the lives of the true prophets of God, in the Old Testament or New Testament. Even among the apostles you do not hear of Andrew being

upset because his brother Peter was more prominent than himself. There was respect on the part of all for the role that all played in the furthering of the beautiful message of truth to lost and dying men. Where would God's people be if not for Elijah, John the Baptist, Elisha, Micaiah, Hosea, Jonah, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Daniel, Peter, Andrew, and Thomas? Where would the church be today without outspoken men like J.D Tant, Roy Cogdill, Jim Cope, Cecil Willis, Connie W. Adams, Ron Halbhook, Tom O'Neal, and others? Each generation must have men who are watchful and wise, who sound the alarms when digressions are beginning. We need to be thankful for those who have these abilities. Although not as prominent, where would we be without Granville Tyler, Sam Binkley, Wiley Adams, Barney Keith, and others who are serving and have served faithfully holding up the "old paths" perhaps in a quieter manner, but just as diligently and just as faithfully as others who may be more prominent. There need be no jealousy on the part of any preacher of the gospel over the abilities that others may possess. Each man who preaches the truth faithfully is seeking to please God and not to impress some party of critics. May all faithful preachers respect all fellow brethren who care for the lost, and for the purity of truth. The younger must respect the older and learn from their wisdom. Be thankful for the wisdom of the older who have fought the battles and know the score!

There need be no jealousy on the part of any preacher of the gospel over the abilities that others may possess.

"We are a group of people who are trying to be just simply Christians, like we can read about in the Bible. We base everything we do and teach on the instructions we find in the Bible." I found what my denominational friends said was not there. You can too."

keck@thelynns.clearwire.net Via Biblical Insights, March 2005, pages 11, 12

2078 E. Nine Mile Rd., Pensacola, Florida 32514



Decision For Christ

William V. Beasley

In his preaching William Graham urges his hearers to make a (the, your) *Decision for Christ*. That the phrase *Decision for Christ* is not to be found in the Scriptures is made evident after spending a few minutes with a good concordance, or with a computer Bible program, like BibleSoft.

The name *Christ* is found between 520 times (American Standard Version) and 555 times (King James Version). *Christ* is never found when immediately preceded by *Decision for*. The venerated King James Version has the word *decision* only twice; both times in Joel 3:14. The American Standard Version doubles that number. In addition to Joel 3:14 the word *decision* is also found in Acts 25:21 and Romans 14:1. *Decision* is found nine times in the Old Testament of the New King James Version and also in Luke 23:51; Acts 24:22; and 25:21. The Revised Standard Version has *decision* a total of eleven times, but only twice (Mark 14:64; Acts 25:21) in the New Testament. The New International Version (not necessarily a standard translation, but one that is very popular with denominationalists) has *decision* nine times in the Old Testament and six times (Matt. 27:1; Mark 15:1; Luke 23:51; John 1:13; Acts 21:25; 25:21) in the New Testament.

While the phrase *Decision for Christ* is not found in the Scriptures, I understand (or, at least, I think I do) what is meant thereby. It is, in the jargon of false doctrine, equivalent to “Get Saved.”

“Come to Jesus,” and/or “Accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior.” The concept or idea of making a *deci-*

sion for Christ is so important to the followers of William Graham that the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association publishes *Decision* magazine.

The New Testament passages that speak of individuals making a *decision for Christ* are:

1. “You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision? And they all condemned him as deserving death” (Mark 14:64-65, RSV).

2. “Early in the morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people came to the decision to put Jesus to death” (Matt. 27:1, NIV).

3. “Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, reached a decision. They bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate” (Mark 15:1, NIV).

A vast majority of the problems (false doctrines; hindrances to unity, etc.) in the religious world (of those who claim to believe in Jesus Christ) have been the result of an individual or individuals making a decision for Christ. Someone(s) made the decision for Christ that salvation is by faith only, or, as it

is now more popularly presented, salvation at the point of faith. We know that a fallible man made that decision because the decision from Christ himself said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16, KJV).

Some man (or men) made the decision for Christ that baptism does not save. The apostle Peter, one who was

Someone(s) made the decision for Christ that . . .

- salvation is by faith only
- baptism does not save
- one church is as good as another
- join the church of your choice
- mechanical instruments of music ought to be used in the worship of God

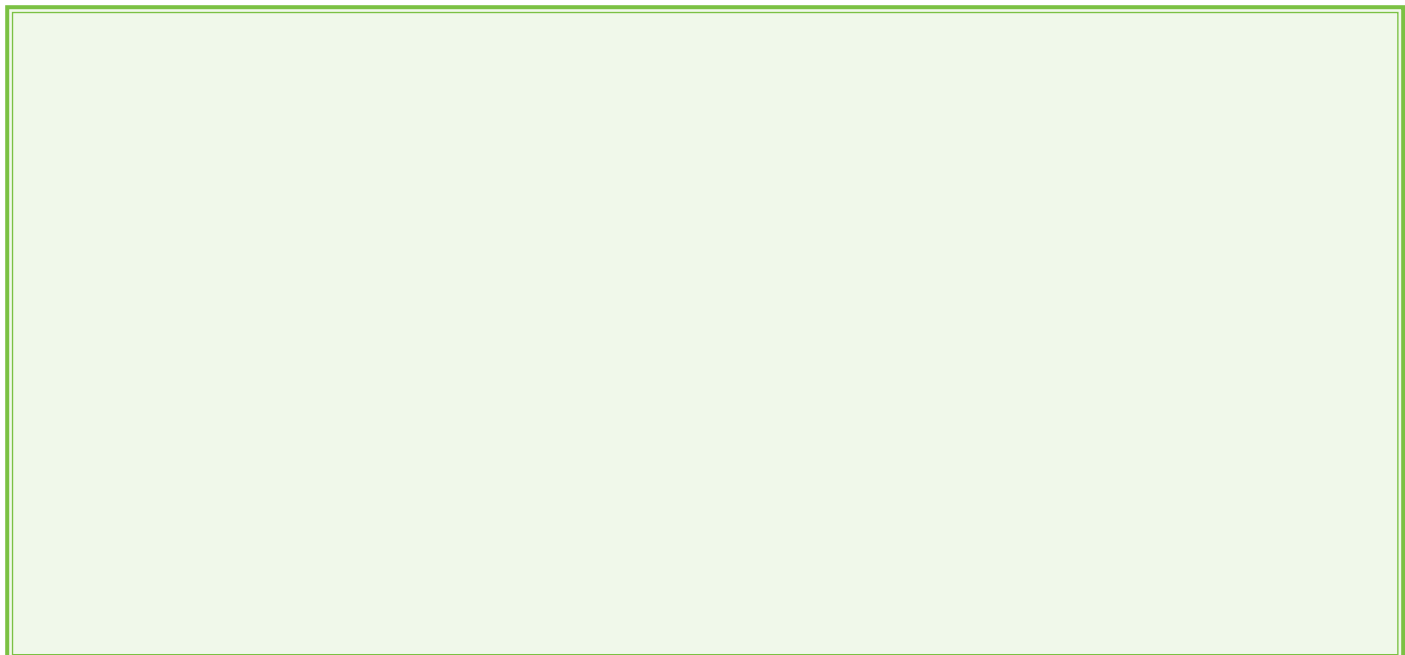
guided by the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 15:26-27) that he might reveal the truth of the gospel, wrote: “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also *now* (emphasis mine, wvb) save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 3:21, KJV).

The decision for Christ was also made by fallible men that “One church is as good as another” and based upon that decision for Christ began to tell other men to “Join the church of your choice.” The decision of Christ himself was made known, following the confession of Peter (“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” [Matt. 16:16b]), by saying, “And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18, ASV). Jesus said “my church” (single in number) and not “my churches.” That this refers not to Peter but to Peter’s confession is made most evident by the apostle Paul: “For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11, ASV). The Holy Spirit, through the Apostle Paul, made it clear that there is in reality only one church: “. . . and he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. . . . There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling” (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4). No, man does not have the scriptural right to join the church of his (man’s) choice, but man can (Hallelujah!) be added to the church of Christ’s choice! This becomes a reality when one is baptized into Christ: “. . . praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47, NKJV; cf. Rom. 6:3-4).

Others (fallible, sinful men and women) have made the decision for Christ that mechanical instruments of music ought to be used in the worship of God under the present dispensation. But, once again, inspired men (those who were specially chosen by Christ to reveal truth) used such words as “sing” (1 Cor. 14:15; Jas. 5:13), “sang” (Acts 16:25, KJV) or “singing” (Acts 16:25, ASV), and “sung” (Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26). For hundreds of years man was generally willing to do precisely what was revealed until one in the Roman Catholic Church made the decision for Christ that the instrument of the Old Testament was acceptable, and the Protestant Churches (which have long forgotten how to protest the abuses of Roman Catholicism) have aped the mother of denominations and followed along like mindless sheep.

The examples are far too numerous for this to be an exhaustive study. In fact, each and every false doctrine is but another example of fallible, sinful man making a decision for Christ, instead of being willing to abide by and in the decisions made by the one whom they claim to follow. This old world would be a far, far better place if men and women would cease and desist from making any decision for Christ, and be content to obey the gospel, by being baptized “into Christ” (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27), and walk in the decisions that the Christ has made for himself (and for us), as revealed in the New Testament.

1572 Sandy Lane, Lincolnton, North Carolina 28093-8309
BeesNest@aol.com



Revisionism

Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

The primary definition of “revisionism” in *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* is: “Advocacy of the revision of an accepted, usually long-standing view, theory, or doctrine, especially a revision of historical events and movements.”

Revisionism, as defined here, can have a wide range of applications in a variety of contexts. The term for a while was used within the Communist movement by conservatives to describe efforts made to reform the movement—so widely so that this usage found its way into many dictionaries as a second meaning. It is sometimes used of efforts to rewrite history so as to make it compatible with the “political correctness” of the present time. The term would fit about any effort to revise any long held position to make it harmonize with an updated version of the position. So, it can be applied to giving biblical words and passages a slanted or forced meaning or interpretation so as to make them harmonize with what is perceived to be a more enlightened view. This is the way we use it in this article.

Revisionism in any context is usually born of a desire to make the “square peg” of an original version fit into the “round hole” of a revised edition. In an effort to harmonize the latest popular viewpoint with long-standing positions, the revisionist usually questions whether the old “facts” that was the basis of the old position

were “facts” at all—so he reshapes the old to fit the new.

I think I am seeing a disturbing amount of revisionism among my own brethren.

Days of Creation

The Bible says, “In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed” (Exod. 31:17).

Most any ordinary reader would conclude that this is saying that God made heaven and earth in six regular twenty-four hour days—especially since the six work days for Jews were six ordinary days (v. 15). Then there is the language of the Genesis account of creation. With each day of creation, the account ends with “and the evening and the morning were the (first, second, etc.) day” (Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31). Without help one would not get any idea other than that these days were ordinary twenty-four hour days.

Why would one feel the need to have them mean anything else? Would such an interpretation conflict with other plain passages on the subject of

creation? No. But it does run head on with much of the scientific community’s theorizing about the origin of the universe, the earth, and life. Hence many Christians, not wanting to appear scientifically challenged, fall all over themselves trying to find a way to harmonize the creation story with the latest scientific theory of origins. Therefore, the six days of creation are revised to allow for enough time for the universe and man to have evolved into their present state by natural evolutionary processes. So, these days must have really been “ages.”

One needs to understand that scientific theories of the origin of the universe and life are just that—theories. Theories based on the *interpretation* of data gathered by the scientific community. That interpretation is often tainted by a bias toward naturalism. These theories are constantly being challenged, debated, and fine tuned within the scientific community itself. The problem is that *theory* is accepted and taught as *fact* within most of the academic community. Many academics try to make anyone who questions the validity of their scientific “facts” out to be some kind of backward ignoramus who still thinks the earth is flat.

Some brethren just cannot live with that kind of stigma, so they are quite willing to accommodate the day-age theory—either by accepting it outright or by accepting it as a possibility. So, they are unwilling to challenge it when it is taught.

Do you ask, “What harm can the day-age theory do?” It undermines faith in the credibility of the Bible as a whole. If we cannot depend on the obvious meaning of the words describing the creation, then how can we accept anything else so plainly stated with any degree of certainty? If we cannot accept at face value and depend on the biblical account of the *origin* of man, how can we depend on the biblical statements about his *destiny*?

Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage

The Lord’s language on divorce and remarriage seems rather straightforward at first glance.

But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery (Matt. 5:32).

The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife,

except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery (Matt. 19:3-9).

And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery (Mark 10:11-12).

Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery (Luke 16:18).

One would think that language so simple would not generate so much controversy. When I first began preaching (a little over fifty years ago), most brethren did not find it nearly as hard to understand what the terms used by the Lord meant—though the teaching was not always applied consistently. But, back then divorce was far more rare than it is now. It was almost unheard of among brothers and sisters in Christ, at least in the areas where I did my early preaching. You might find a case or two here and there, but it was a rare thing. Now, it is just as rare to find a congregation that does not have members who are divorced and remarried. As the cases have increased so have the ways to try to justify them. It has become increasingly hard for brethren to accept at face value the language and terms used by the Lord in his teaching on this subject. Applying the language as it is written often has unpleasant consequences for those we love dearly and for congregations who have to deal with it. So, we at times may allow our emotions and sentiments to rule and conclude that the language must not mean what it seems to say on the surface. So, we find ways to redefine the biblical words and concepts so as to make them more acceptable to the realities of modern society. Consequently, we are hearing more and more ingenious but dubious ways to redefine words and concepts affecting the nature

of the institution of marriage.

Adultery Redefined

For years most of us have taught that “adultery” means to “have unlawful intercourse with another’s wife,” as defined by both Joseph Thayer and W.E. Vine in their highly respected lexicons. Or as *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Languages* puts it, “voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and a partner other than the lawful spouse.” So, it was generally understood that the reason one who divorced his spouse and married another committed adultery was because he was having sex with “a partner other than the lawful spouse.” So, as long as they were doing that, they were “living in adultery” and that repentance would not allow for their continuing in that relationship.

Some are now redefining “adultery” as “breaking the covenant.” Hence, the “adultery” in Jesus’ statements on divorce becomes just the act of covenant breaking and not unlawful sexual intercourse. So, to correct this sin, one who has divorced his/her spouse has to repent only of “covenant breaking” rather than of “living in adultery.” Given this new definition, brethren can justify one becoming a Christian (and congregations accepting him) and continuing to live in the second marriage because he only has to repent of having broken the covenant. He may have married and divorced several times before coming to the Lord. According to this revisionist definition, he would only need to repent of and cease breaking covenants—rather than ceasing to live with a wife who is not lawful for him to have (cf. Matt. 14:4).

If this new found definition works in one place, it should work in other places as well. The woman caught in “the very act” of adultery (John 8:4) would have been in the act of covenant breaking. One with “eyes full of adultery” (2 Pet. 2:14) or looking upon a woman to lust (Matt. 5:28) would only

be contemplating covenant breaking (maybe even a mental divorce) in his heart. Who can believe it?

The Cause For Divorce

More and more I am hearing and reading from brethren that there can be several lawful reasons for divorcing a mate other than fornication. It is just that, *if one marries again*, the cause of divorce must have been fornication. Thus, one may divorce for multiple causes without sin—as long as he remains unmarried. I have

divorce your wives” period. Only in verse 9, do we learn that there is any exception to this as Jesus explains the additional consequences of remarrying after divorce. It is here that we are forced to conclude that there is one exception and only one exception to the no divorce rule. Hardship and abuse cases that might cause one to divorce another without fornication, though they may be heartbreaking, do not change what Jesus said about divorcing for “just any reason.”

with problems created by marriage and divorce. Therefore, I can understand the attractiveness of this position after trying to help couples sort out messes into which some find themselves. No one likes to tell an unjustly divorced person that he cannot have the joy of a new marriage. But because a view is attractive and seemingly solves some tricky situations does not mean that it is the truth.

I believe all sides of this issue agree that God does not sanction all civilly

To the question, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?” Jesus answers “from the beginning it was not so” in spite of what Moses had allowed because of hardness of the heart.

seen different lists of scenarios from different people, where they think that divorce would be lawful—without sin until the person remarries. All of these lists have one thing in common, they present scenarios that pull at the heart strings. But we are still faced with question asked Jesus and his answer in Matthew 19:3-8.

Nowhere in the text is it indicated that divorce for other causes is OK as long as there is no remarriage, but rather the opposite is indicated. To the question, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?” Jesus answers “from the beginning it was not so” in spite of what Moses had allowed because of hardness of the heart. What was not so? That one should divorce his wife. What God joined together man is not to put asunder. What sin does one commit by divorcing his wife for “just any reason”? The sin of divorce, which God hates (Mal. 2:16). Moses permitted divorce, but Jesus made it clear that from beginning it was not so. Nor is it so now. Note that it does not say that Moses permitted divorce *and remarriage*, but merely divorce and from the beginning it was not so. What was not so? For “you to

Bypassing Civil Requirements

There was a time when we thought we knew a marriage or a divorce when we saw it. But increasingly, I am hearing from beloved brethren that, at least in some instances, the civil aspects of divorce means nothing to God and therefore are irrelevant to a “real” divorce as God sees it. I read at least one suggestion that the little piece of paper (divorce paper where one had been unjustly divorced) means nothing to God and that you may as well blow your nose on it and throw it into the toilet. If civil papers *ending* a marriage have no more value than that, then civil papers *beginning* a marriage should have about the same value. If not, why not? The idea seems to be that the civil requirements relative to marriage or divorce are no more than formalities to satisfy human law and have no bearing on the reality of marriage or divorce in God’s eyes. Before we start disposing of marriage licenses and/or divorce papers so freely, let’s back off a bit and take a deep breath and think about the consequences of bypassing civil and cultural requirements for marriage and divorce.

As a gospel preacher and former elder, I have many times had to wrestle

sanctioned marriages or divorces. And that civil sanction *alone* does not make either a marriage or a divorce acceptable to God. But, does that mean that civil requirements are irrelevant to marriage and divorce in God’s sight? Does it mean that civil matters are nothing more than formalities to satisfy human law? Hardly.

Three God-ordained Institutions

Through the years brethren have preached that there are three basic God-ordained institutions: The Home (or Marriage), the State, and the Church. I still believe that is good preaching. The first two are temporal given by God to facilitate an orderly and civilized society for all men as long as the earth stands. In other words, these two are God-ordained social institutions for the temporal welfare and happiness of mankind. Where there is a breakdown of either marriage or government, chaos and a lack of common civility results.

The third, the church, is spiritual and designed to minister to man’s spiritual needs and to prepare him to live with God in the world to come. The Bible is more specific and detailed

about the religious activities of man and things pertaining to “the church.” God alone determines what we can offer in worship and service to him and has expressly authorized what is to be done. The form of government (local/congregational), worship, and work for the church are precisely laid out and they are the same world-wide (cf. 1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17).

In ordaining “the powers that be” and making them his ministers for good (Rom. 13:1-4), God did not order a specific form of government for all places and times but left that for the various societies and cultures to work out. While I like the American model and believe that it is the best in the world, it is not the only form ordained of God. Yet, there are certain principles of righteousness to which God holds all nations and their governments accountable (Prov. 13:34; 16:12)—without being specific as to the forms of government for various nations of the world. Citizens are told to honor and submit to the “powers that be” in whatever the form adopted by their society. Since these civil powers are ordained of God, their laws must be obeyed as ordinances of God (Rom. 13:2), except when it would cause one to disobey a higher law of God (Acts 5:28-29).

The home or marriage is the oldest of God’s social institutions. In the beginning God made man after his image, male and female, and gave them the responsibility of procreation (Gen. 1:27-28). They were given sexual desire to facilitate this mission. He gave the same responsibility and desire to the animal kingdom as described in the preceding verses—with a marked difference. Man was to fulfil his mission and satisfy his desire within the institution of marriage (Gen. 2:24). While those of the animal kingdom satisfy their desire to mate with multiple partners, man was made to live on a higher plane. God made him after his image with intelligence and the capacity of making moral judgments and gave him his word to guide him in

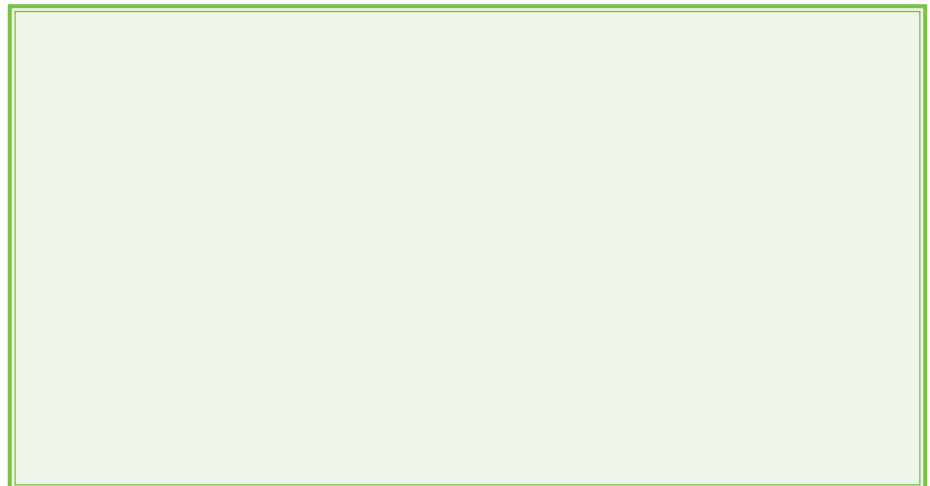
those judgments. Man is to satisfy his desire to mate only within the confines of monogamous marriage (cf. Heb. 13:4), anything else is fornication or adultery. The wisdom of all of this has been borne out through the ages as we have seen all the problems, heartaches and even disease that promiscuous life styles have caused and the harm that broken marriages have done to children.

While the Bible says much about “marrying and giving in marriage” (cf. Matt. 24:28), it says little about the specific procedures. It just states that they married. When one takes into account all the Bible says on the subject he should be able to see that procedures differed from place to place, nation to nation, and culture to culture over the years covered by biblical history. But, whatever the procedure, the time and the place, the inspired writers called it marrying.

Nowhere is it indicated that marriage was just a informal private agreement, but a “covenant” (cf. Mal. 2:14), a formally ratified agreement. The word (*berit*) translated “covenant” means: (1) covenant, alliance, pledge (a) between men (1) a treaty, an alliance, a league (man to man), (2) a constitution, an ordinance (monarch to subjects), (3) an agreement, a pledge (man to man), (4) an alliance (used of friendship), (5) an alliance (used of marriage) (b) between God

and man, (1) an alliance (used of friendship), (2) a covenant (divine ordinance with signs or pledges)” (*Brown -Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*); a “compact . . . confederacy, confederate, covenant, league” (Strong)—all of which require formal confirmation, ratification or solemnization (Gal. 3:15).

The word for “confirmed” in Galatians 3:15 is from “*kuroo*,” meaning “to make authoritative, i.e. ratify” (Stong); “(1) to make valid; (2) to confirm publicly or solemnly, to ratify” (Thayer, italics mine, eob); “to make valid, ratify, impart authority or influence” (Vine). The covenant to live together as husband and wife, like other covenants, was formally and publicly ratified (ratification is an essential element of a covenant) by whatever procedure dictated by that society, thus one can read of various ways a covenant was ratified in the Bible. Just as God has given certain commands and principles to regulate civil government but leaves it to each society to establish its form of government, so it is that after giving the basic nature of marriage (a man leaving his parents and joining himself to his wife and their becoming one flesh), it is apparent from reading of marriage in the Scriptures that God left it to each society, culture, or government to work out the specific procedures for entering and ratifying the marriage covenant.



Just as each society has laws and procedures for *beginning* a marriage and its ratification, then each society has laws and procedures for *ending* the marriage. We are obligated to obey the civil authority under which we live in marriage and divorce just as we are in all other matters. As previously noted, the civil laws are to be treated as ordinances of God (Rom. 13:2).

When Jesus taught on marriage and divorce, he did not preface it with an explanation of what constituted a marriage or a divorce. He did not have to. Those to whom he spoke knew when one had “married her” (Mark 6:17) and when one had become divorced (Matt. 5:31) in their society. Neither of these things was done in a closet. Both marriage and divorce were publicly recognized as such by the societies in which the people lived.

God does regulate and put limits on what can be done in marriage and divorce in whatever society one lives without binding a uniform procedure for all nations and societies. He limits marriage to a man and a woman. He also limits a couple to one marriage for as long as both lives (Rom. 7:1-4). If either dies, the other is free to marry another. Jesus allows only one exception to this limitation. One who has a spouse who commits fornication has the option of putting the fornicator away and entering into another marriage covenant without committing adultery (Matt. 19:9).

How does a couple go about marrying? Jesus did not say. The procedure is left to the society in which they live. In our society it is generally done by getting a licence and having the marriage solemnized by a civil or religious “official.” Until this is done, it is not a marriage. I heard of a Kentucky couple a few years ago who came down from the mountains into the county seat, purchased a license and headed for Cincinnati on their honeymoon. They were contacted and called back home to complete the marriage by having it solemnized by a judge. They may have been married in their minds, but not really until they met the civil requirements of the state in which they lived.

What procedure must one follow in “putting her away”? Again, Jesus did not say. Does that mean that each person is at liberty to divorce by any procedure he might choose? No. If marriage is a formally ratified covenant, thus a matter of public record, then it follows that divorce also would be a matter of public record. The manner of making it so is left to the society in which one lives and may differ from society to society. In Israel it was done by giving a bill of divorcement (Deut. 24:1; Mark 10:4). In our nation it is done by petitioning for divorce and having the divorce finalized by the divorce decree issued by a judge. Without this there is no divorce.

I have a hard time relegating the question of the role of civil powers in marriage and divorce to a peripheral issue of

the overall marriage, divorce, and remarriage controversy as some of my good friends are inclined to do. The civil and societal aspects of the covenant and its ratification are at the very core of what constitutes a marriage or a divorce. Marriage is more than just a private agreement between a couple to be married before God, it is a *covenant*—a formal agreement that requires formal or public ratification.

While all “marriages” and “divorces” are recognized as such by God, not all are approved by him. The sacred text says that Herod had *married* his brother Philip’s wife—not that he lived with her, or that he had *apparently* married her, but he had *married* her (Mark 6:17). It was a marriage and it was real. However, it was not lawful or in keeping with God’s law. Even such unlawful marriages are still called marriages by divine revelation.

One can dissolve his marriage by divorce, but he cannot dissolve the bond by which the law of God binds him to his first wife even though they may no longer be married. Hence God charges him with adultery when he marries another (Rom. 7:1-4). Is it possible to be bound and unmarried at the same time? Yes. Notice 1 Corinthians 7:10-11, “And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, let not the wife depart (divorce or become unmarried, eob) from her husband. But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.” She has but two options, “remain *unmarried*” or be reconciled to her husband. Why? Because, though she is “unmarried,” she is still “bound by the law” to her husband (Rom. 7:2; 1 Cor. 7:39). Because of this she is not at liberty to marry another without sinning against God.

Neither marriage nor divorce is a private arrangement or mental act. If this revised version of marriage and divorce becomes widely practiced it will throw society into chaos. A couple out on Saturday night allows their passion to get out of control, but believing sex is for marriage, could agree under the stars and “before God” to be married in the back seat of a car and they would be married “in the eyes of God” even if not in the eyes of civil law. If civil law and cultural norms can be bypassed, then why not? There would be no way for us to know who of our neighbors were married or just committing fornication; after all, the only proof we would have would be their word for it. How could the church discipline fornicators, for they might be married “in the sight of God” because they may have had a meeting of minds in a mental wedding? Or if brethren see a married man, whose wife becomes unfaithful to him, move out of his house and in with another woman without benefit of civil divorce, how could they charge him with adultery—he may have given his former unfaithful wife a “mental divorce.” Or are “mental divorces” only available to a spouse who has been wrongfully divorced?

Make no mistake about, the driving force behind the revisionist teaching that unjust divorces granted by civil powers are not really divorces, is the need to provide justification for unjustly divorced parties to later remarry. From a purely personal and sentimental point of view, how I could easily wish this were so. There are people whom I love dearly who are in that unfortunate position. How I wish there was a way that I could conscientiously accept their position and tell them they were OK. But my wishing it so, does not make it so. The facts have a way of getting in the way.

There are several things that those who believe one unjustly divorced may later mentally divorce the one who had unjustly divorced him need to consider. If this second divorce from this marriage can be just a mental act, why can not the initial divorce from that marriage just be mental? If one catches his wife sleeping around, why bother with the effort to get a divorce the conventional way? Why not just mentally put her away (it's a whole lot less expensive) and then find another willing to live with him and they mentally and/or verbally commit themselves to each other as husband and wife and set up housekeeping, all without bothering with the nuisance of courthouse papers. Why can a divorce be mental only when a person has been unjustly divorced and not at other times? Why does the mental rule apply only to the breaking of marriages and not apply to the making of marriages?

Conclusion

Really, after all the arguments have been made and all justifications have been exhausted, one will still have to deal with the plain wording of the text that would require help to misunderstand—whether or not we are always consistent in applying it.

Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery (Matt. 19:9).

One would need help to make “whosoever” mean only Christians and not aliens. Or to make “commits adultery” mean “covenant breaking” rather than immoral sexual activity. Or to make either divorce or marrying mean just mental or private informal acts bypassing civil ratification.

When we wipe away all emotionalism, verbal gymnastics and the “what-ifs” of extreme and unusual circumstances, Christ’s teaching is not that hard to understand and apply. If one divorces his wife for any reason other than fornication, he sins by “putting asunder” what God has joined together, whether or not he marries another (Matt. 19:6), then he further sins by committing adultery when and if he marries again. He also sins if he unjustly divorces

and puts his wife in a position where she commits adultery when she marries again (Matt. 5:32)—for if anyone marries the divorced wife she (and the one she marries) commits adultery. Nor is there room in these passages for a second putting away of the person who is already “away” as a result of the first “putting away.”

The only person, according to the words of Jesus, who has a right to remarry is the person who has put away a fornicator—providing the one he marries has a right to marry. That should not be too hard to understand. Neither should it be hard to understand that in any “putting away,” someone is doing the “putting away” and the other is the one being “put away.” (Granted, there may be in some rare cases a mutual putting away by agreement.) And that if either the one who “puts away” (except for fornication) or the one who “is put away” marries again he or she commits adultery. There is nothing in the passages to allow for a post-fixed divorce—one where the one who “is put away” later fixes things to make him/her the one “who puts away.” How can one later “put away” the one from whom he or she has already been “away” since the first “putting away”?

Brethren, let us put aside sentimentalism and be content with what the text says and respect what it does not say and quit this business of revising, redefining, and complicating words and concepts to try to alleviate difficulties, alleged inequities, and hardships that might be caused by applying the text as written. Unless we do, besides violating Christ’s law, we may contribute to social chaos by teaching people that they can marry or divorce without the benefit of legal requirement and to say nothing of further splintering of those who profess to be trying to follow the New Testament order. We cannot afford either.

223 1st St., Russellville, Alabama 35653
edbragwell@bellsouth.net

Editor’s Note: *We are happy to print brother Bragwell’s article on “Revisionism.” Brother Bragwell is a staff writer and writes with respect toward others and deserves to be heard. With some of the positions brother Bragwell took, many of us are in disagreement. Brother Bragwell and I exchanged articles on the issue of whether fornication is the only cause of divorce approved in the Bible and the role of civil government in divorce. The exchanges were so long that this prohibited publishing them in the magazine. Consequently, the Guardian of Truth Foundation has made them available in a small paperback book entitled, Bible Causes of Divorce and the Role of Government in Divorce, and is available through our bookstore. We hope those who are interested in this subject will read both sides. I am only publishing brother Bragwell’s initial article in the magazine.*

“It Is For The Best”

Jarrod Jacobs

Probably all of us have used and/or heard this statement from time to time. When something unpleasant happens, some will say, “It is for the best.” While this can be true at times, it is not always true. For instance, I have heard this statement being used in reference to children of divorced parents being bounced from one home to another. The comment was made that they would spend part of their time with one parent (and step-parent), and then part of their time with the other parent (and step-parent). Then one said, “It is for the best.”

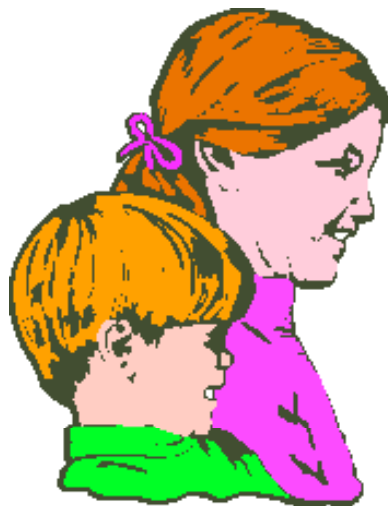
Let me ask, for whom is it “for the best”? For those children who are constantly in a state of upheaval as they move from one residence to the other; or is it for the parents who get their conscience soothed in watching their children, but are not actually “tied down” to having them all the time as they would have if the original married couple had stayed together?

Don’t misunderstand, there are times that one can be scripturally divorced from his/her mate (Matt. 5:32; 19:9). However, in the majority of divorce cases today, where people just get divorced because they “fell out of love,” or “just couldn’t get along,” etc.; how is it “for the best” to put our innocent children through that?

The purpose of this article is not solely about the above case, but to show us that people today are more selfish than we like to admit. Sayings such as “it is for the best” applied to a broken home show just how selfish we can be.

When someone says something like, “It is for the best,” find out for whom and why that particular thing is the best! It may be. We might say, “The child’s parents died, so the grandparents are raising him/her. It is for the best.” We could discuss one’s marital status, and say, “They felt

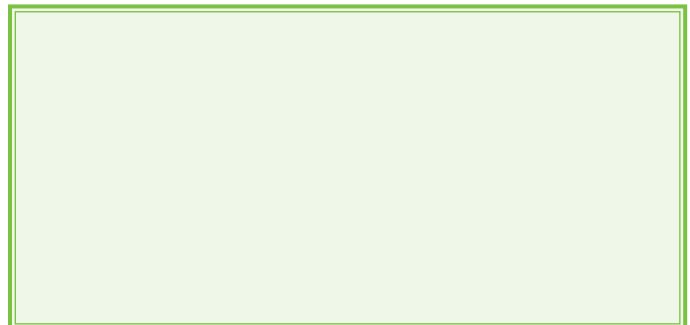
that in light of Matthew 19:9, they didn’t have the right to remarry and never did. It is for the best.” Again, “In order to fulfill Ephesians 6:4 in the best way, the father did not accept his promotion at work, which paid more, but required longer hours and a grueling schedule on the family. It is for the best.” Some may have to part with a friend because his rotten character and influence are damaging to the Christian. That parting would be “for the best” (1 Cor. 15:33; 2 Cor. 6:14-17).



In other words, it is always “for the best” when we make decisions based upon God’s will (Col. 3:17; 1 Pet. 4:11). It is never “for the best” when we make decisions to satisfy our selfish desires. God’s way is best, not man’s way (Isa. 55:9)! When we forget this and justify sinful behavior by saying, “It is for the best,” we are setting ourselves up for a fall and an eternity not with God, but with Satan and his angels!

Is what you are doing really “for the best”? Examine your actions in light of God’s word and see if God thinks “It is for the best” (1 Thess. 5:21; 2 Cor. 13:5).

7420 Hwy 405, Maceo, Kentucky 42355



Compromises of the Plan of Salvation

Kyle Campbell

“But they have not all obeyed the gospel (Rom. 10:16). Why have some not obeyed the gospel? Some have not obeyed because they have not been exposed to the truth (Rom. 10:13-15). Others have been prejudiced against the truth or have received not the love of the truth (2 Thess. 2:9-12). But others are misled by false teachers who compromise the truth which makes one free (John 8:32; 17:17).



Max Lucado

Unfortunately, some examples of compromise are within the Lord church. Max Lucado, a well-known author and member of the church, in December 1996, said over Lubbock, Texas radio station (KJAX), “All you have to do is call him Father. Just call him Father. Just turn your heart to him even right now as I am speaking. Call him your Father. And your Father will respond. Why don’t you do that?” After stating what denominationalists call the

sinner’s prayer, the announcer of the program welcomed them into the family of God. After Max confirmed they were saved, he called upon them to “find a church . . . to be baptized. I want to encourage you to read your Bible. But I don’t want you to do any of that so that you will be saved. I want you to do all of that because you are saved.”

Rubel Shelly, another member of the Lord church, stated that the only tests of fellowship are whether a person believes in a core doctrine (the deity of Christ) and who will fellowship denominations. He wrote in his bulletin, “It is a scandalous and outrageous lie to teach that salvation arises from human activity. We do not contribute one whit to our salvation.”

The fact that Lucado and Shelly affirm that one is saved before and without baptism for the remission of sins is seen in the following facts: Max Lucado has co-authored a book called *Christ in Easter* with Billy Graham and other false

teachers; spoke at St. John Neumann Catholic Church, sang songs with instruments and called the priest Father, swapped pulpits with Baptist preachers; said, whenever I see a man call God Father, I see a brother played a role in the Billy Graham Crusade in South Texas; spoke at Christ United Methodist Church, Memphis; co-hosted and narrated The Young Messiah Tour in a Pentecostal charismatic group; spoke at Promise Keepers; was keynote speaker at the 1997 Nashville Jubilee; etc. Rubel Shelly preaches that there are sincere, knowledgeable, devout Christians scattered among all the various denominations. Yet, they are separated from one another by creedal formulations, human names, cumbersome organizational structures. . . . He further said, my children will not stay with the church I grew up in. They will not be part of an irrelevance. It is very clear that Rubel and Max can and do fellowship any and all who believe in Christ—no matter their false teaching and practice.

What do the Scriptures say? Many teach salvation by grace alone and some even teach salvation by grace alone through faith alone. Never in the history of God’s dealings with man has a person been saved by grace alone or by faith alone. God’s grace saved Noah in the ark when he obeyed by faith (Gen. 6:8-22). Drawn by the power of the cross, the sinner believes in Christ (John 8:24), repents of sin (Luke 13:3, 5), confesses faith in Christ (Acts 8:37), and is immersed into Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). Works of obedience without faith is legalism, for thereby one thinks he can save himself apart from Christ (Matt. 26:28; Eph. 1:7). By faith, one must obey the law of Christ (Matt. 7:21-23; 1 Cor. 9:21; Rom. 8:1-2; Gal. 6:2; Jas. 1:21-25; 2:12, 24). Not one alien sinner was saved in apostolic times by grace alone or by faith alone. If grace alone saves, then all will be saved (Tit. 2:11-12).

It is possible for all to be saved (Matt. 11:28-30). But all must save themselves or submit to the conditions of receiving God’s grace (Acts 2:40). God adds to the church those who

The Tragic Death of Uriah the Hittite

Marc W. Gibson

After David, king of Israel, had committed adultery with the beautiful Bathsheba, she told him she was “with child” (2 Sam. 11:4-5). David was in a dilemma. It would be obvious that the child was not fathered by Bathsheba’s husband, Uriah the Hittite, since he was away at the time on the battlefield as a soldier in the army of Israel. This could lead to an embarrassing investigation that would expose David’s sin of adultery. With his reputation and soul on the line, David foolishly devised a plan to cover up his sin.

From Attempted Cover-up to Murder

David’s plan was intended to cover any questions about the cause of Bathsheba’s pregnancy. He would call Uriah back from the battlefield and allow him to go home to be with Bathsheba to spend some romantic time together. That way the child would appear to be fathered by Uriah. One has to wonder how much Bathsheba was involved in making this plan. Unfortunately, the best laid plans often do not work out as intended. David figured Uriah would jump at the chance to spend some romantic time with Bathsheba, but he had Uriah figured wrong.

David asked for Uriah to be sent to him personally (v. 6). Uriah already had the reputation of being one of David’s “mighty men” (2 Sam. 23:39), but now he had a personal invitation to visit the king himself. After David engaged in some chit-chat, he told Uriah, “Go down to your house and wash your feet” (v. 8). In other words, “Go home, Uriah, and stay the night with your wife.” David even sent a gift of

food to make Uriah’s evening with Bathsheba special. But Uriah did not go home. He slept at the door of the king’s house with all the servants of the king (v. 9).

After David learned of where Uriah had spent the night, he questioned him as to why he did not go to his house (v. 10). Uriah told the king these words:

The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open fields. Shall I then go to my house to eat and drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing” (v. 11).

One can only appreciate the dedication of Uriah to his service as a soldier. “Uriah knew and observed the rules of ‘holy war,’ including the expectation that warriors in combat would abstain from sexual relations (Dt. 23:10f.; cf. 1 S. 21:4)” (*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4, rev. ed., 956).

David had one more trick up his sleeve. Surely, if he got Uriah drunk, he would stumble back home to be with his wife. So he kept Uriah in Jerusalem another day and made



obey the gospel (Acts 2:47). Today is the day of salvation (2 Cor. 6:2). Become a Christian and be faithful unto death and you will be granted a crown of life (Rev. 2:10). Compromise is absolutely unacceptable to God (Gal. 1:6-9; 1 Pet. 4:11; 2 Tim. 4:2; Matt. 15:9; Jude 3; 2 John 9-11).

251 Hunters Glen Dr., Lufkin, Texas 75904

him drunk at a meal (v. 13a), and afterwards Uriah “went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, *but he did not go down to his house*” (v. 13b). David’s plan was thwarted again. He must have felt he had no other alternative but to orchestrate Uriah’s death on the battlefield, and with Joab’s help that terrible plan was accomplished (vv. 14-17). What a tragic and sad end for Uriah the Hittite, whose only fault was his unwavering dedication and faithfulness as a soldier in David’s army.

Uriah—Dedicated to the End

We can learn an important lesson from Uriah. His dedication to his call as a soldier was steadfast. He did not let earthly things distract him or become a priority over his responsibility as a soldier. Paul wrote to Timothy about our dedication to Christ: “You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare *entangles himself with the affairs of this life*, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier” (2 Tim. 2:3-4). Our call as soldiers in the army of the Lord Jesus Christ is the most important duty we have in this life. Being a Christian outranks all other positions in life we may hold—parent, wife, husband, employee, employer, teacher, policeman, scout leader, coach, doctor, salesman, etc. Uriah died because he was faithful to his call, and we need to be willing to suffer persecution as faithful servants who actively seek the kingdom of God first (Matt. 6:33).

God was very angry about what David had done. Nathan the prophet condemned him, saying, “Why have you despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon” (2 Sam. 12:9). David and his house would suffer terribly in the years to come because of his transgressions (vv. 10-12). Thankfully, David confessed his sin and sought God’s forgiveness (v. 13; Ps. 51). Still, these sad events would be etched into David’s legacy: “David did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, and had not turned aside from any thing that He commanded him all the days of his life, *except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite*” (1 Kings 15:5). It is worth noting that Uriah is mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus: “David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah” (Matt. 1:6). Uriah would not be a forgotten man in the biblical record.

The death of Uriah the Hittite is indeed a tragic tale. Sin not only adversely affects those who participate in it, but also those innocent ones who are closely tied to the situation at hand. We need to avoid the sins that David committed. We also need to appreciate and imitate the dedication of that valiant and loyal man, **Uriah the Hittite**.

6708 O’Doniel Loop W, Lakeland, Florida 33809

Does One Choose To Be Gay?

John Isaac Edwards

What follows is a response to spiritual misinformation printed in the Salem newspaper.

Dear Editor:

The following statement appeared in the Tuesday, September 14, 2004 edition of *The Salem Leader*: “The fact is, no one chooses to be gay any more than someone chooses to be heterosexual. If I had a choice, I certainly would not choose to be gay, but it is who I am. I do feel reassured that the updated translation of Christian scripture clarifies the fact that homosexuality is not a sin. I thank God for who I am and hope to continue to do God’s will.”

O how “the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not” (2 Cor. 4:4)! Leviticus chapter 20, which describes and defines the aforementioned homosexual as abominable and mandated the death penalty for him and his partner (v. 13), also condemns other sexual sins. Does this rationale work for those sins? We would like to see an answer to this please.

What about adultery? The law said, “And the man that committeth adultery with another man’s wife . . . the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death” (Lev. 20:10). Suppose one said, “The fact is, no one chooses to be an adulterer any more than someone chooses to be monogamous. If I had a choice, I certainly would not choose to be an adulterer, but it is who I am. I do feel reassured that the updated translation of Christian scripture clarifies the fact that adultery is not a sin. I thank God for who I am and hope to continue to do God’s will”—how would you deal with that?

How about incest (sexual perversion between persons so closely related that they are forbidden by law to marry)? The same chapter that condemns homosexuality and adultery condemns incest, as it mentions his father’s wife (v. 11), his daughter-in-law (v. 12), his mother-in-law (v. 14), his sister (v. 17) and so on. If one wrote, “The fact is, no one chooses to be incestuous any more than one chooses

not to commit incest. If I had a choice, I certainly would not choose to be incestuous, but it is who I am. I do feel reassured that the updated translation of Christian scripture clarifies the fact that incest is not a sin. I thank God for who I am and hope to continue to do God’s will”—what would you have to say about that?

What about bestiality (sexual relations between a man and an animal)? Leviticus 20:15 states, “And if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death: and ye shall slay the beast.” What if it was argued, “The fact is, no one chooses to practice bestiality any more than someone chooses to be heterosexual. If I had a choice, I certainly would not choose to practice bestiality, but it is who I am. I do feel reassured that the updated translation of Christian scripture clarifies the fact that bestiality is not a sin. I thank God for who I am and hope to continue to do God’s will”—would that be acceptable?

And what would this do for the pedophile (sexual perversion in which children are the preferred sexual object)? Would you accept the following: “The fact is, no one chooses to be a pedophile any more than someone chooses to be heterosexual. If I had a choice, I certainly would not choose to be a pedophile, but it is who I am. I do feel reassured that the updated translation of Christian scripture clarifies the fact that pedophilia is not a sin. I thank God for who I am and hope to continue to do God’s will”—how does that sound to you? Monies collected in suits against the Catholic Church need to be returned and some prison cells need to be unbarred and unlocked, if that is the case.

Upon whatever basis you justify and indemnify homosexual relationships, upon that same basis you justify and indemnify the practice of all other sexual sins; yea, every kind of immorality and ungodliness. We plead with you to renounce and repudiate your sinfulness and accept the sin-atonement sacrifice of Christ, revealed and reported in the gospel, through faith, repentance, baptism and righteous living, that you may be like the Corinthians who were at

Gossiptown

Bobby L. Graham

Everybody's been to Gossiptown at least once in life. Most people spend much time there, because they enjoy the amusements of the place or the company they meet there. Frequently they meet people much like themselves; and occasionally they become so astonished at what they are like when seeing others doing the same thing, that they wake up and decide to leave the place and never return again.

Gossip and all sorts of activities associated with it occupy the time of the people who live there or visit there. The residents decided to stay many years ago, so they could gossip and keep up the lifestyle of the town, while the visitors come once in a while to check it out, with some of them deciding to move there for good.

Let me show you around Gossiptown, because it's the kind of place that attracts many. I do admit, however, that a few have found the place repulsive. The town is divided by a large river flowing through the middle; it is *Falsehood River*. Many lies of all kinds—black lies, white lies, social lies, half lies—false charges, cheats, deceitful ways have been found in the river. It has been said that those who drink the water from that river find it hard to tell the truth again.

one time guilty of such detestable deeds, but were washed, sanctified, and justified (1 Cor. 6:9-11; Acts 18:8).

Sincerely,
John Edwards, a minister of Jesus Christ

P.O. Box 251, Ellettsville, Indiana 46429

Crossing Falsehood River is *Bitterness Bridge*. So many bitter words have been spoken there and hurt feelings have been caused there by the gossip of the town. It is quite common to see people crying, anguishing over what somebody has said, and expressing bitter feelings, thoughts, and words— all because of the falsehoods that have been spread or the disregard of many for the feelings of others.



Down by the river and running next to the bridge is a track, where *Idleness Train* runs on a regular schedule. People who have nothing better to do than gossip ride the train and talk about things they don't understand, pass along what they have heard (especially if it is about an enemy), or speak evil of others. Many reputations

have been ruined and many families have been disrupted by riders on the train.

The *Tunnel of Hate* lies along the track of *Idleness Train*. The tunnel is long and dark, because hate abounds in this town and feeds on the lies that are told. Yes, hate causes many of the lies to begin, and then the lies cause even more hate. Inside the tunnel can be found many angry people, plotting schemes against others, speaking about their suspicions of others, their jealousy and envy. When these angry people have left the *Tunnel of Hate*, they have sometimes caused problems with other residents in the town and even with the visitors. Some families have had much turmoil and churches have had big problems because of the people who spent time in the tunnel. Even some of the businesses and other work place in the town have experienced major disruptions from some of these same people. There seems to be something very evil that happens to the riders on *Idleness Train* who pass through the *Tunnel of Hate*.

The town has two main streets, with one intersecting the other at the middle of town. They are *They Say Avenue* and *I've Heard Boulevard*. The boulevard is a much larger street than the avenue, because many more people travel it than the other. People have sometimes asked about there not being more than two streets for such a large town with so many people. I also have wondered, but the people there are so busy in their gossiping that they seem to have little time to do anything useful. Near the intersection of these two streets is a park where many residents spend a considerable part of the day. It is *Don't Tell Park*. When a passerby is near, he can easily hear people there saying, "Shhh . . . don't you tell now, you hear?" I understand they are doing a lot of talking about what they have picked up from others and don't wish it passed on to certain others, since they are not even sure about its truthfulness. I have

noticed, however, a smirking smile on many of their faces because they have told it to somebody and have enjoyed doing so. Many of the people go straight to Don't Tell Park after getting off Idleness Train that travels through the Tunnel of Hate.

This is Gossiptown. What a town! It is probably one of the more wicked places around, not just because of the crimes committed there, but also because of the hate that begins there. It often spreads to surrounding places and causes many towns and states to have their own problems and crimes. Many who have visited the town have decided never to return, but far too many people have stayed there so long that they wouldn't live anywhere else.

24978 Bubba Trail, Athens, Alabama 35611

If Salvation Is By Faith Only . . .

Johnie Edwards

If it is true, as many churches teach, that salvation is by faith only, then why?

1. Did Jesus Say: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"? When Jesus gave a preaching commission to the apostles, He said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that *believeth and is baptized shall be saved*" (Mark 16:16). If we are saved by faith alone, ever wonder why Jesus did not say: "He that believeth shall be saved?"

2. Did the Apostles teach: "Repent and be baptized"? On the day of Pentecost, when the gospel was preached to the Jews, why did Peter say: "Repent and be baptized . . . for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38)?

3. Was Saul/Paul told to: "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins" (Acts 22:16)? Please note that Saul was told to go into the city and there he would be told what he "must do" (Acts 9:6). So his being baptized was a "must"; if not why not?

4. Did the eunuch ask: "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized" (Acts 8:36)? Philip's preaching of Christ involved preaching about the kingdom or church, the name or authority of Christ and baptism (Acts 8:12). Philip "preached unto him Jesus" (Acts 8:35); and this was where the eunuch learned the necessity of baptism.

5. Did Paul tell Timothy that salvation is in Christ (2 Tim. 2:10)? Then when Paul wrote the Romans and the Galatians, he penned that one is "baptized into Christ" (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:26-27).

6. Did James say: "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (Jas. 2:24)? A quick reading of James 2:14-26 will teach the "honest and good heart" (Luke 8:15); that "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith (or can that kind of faith) save him" (Jas. 2:14)? Then notice: "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (Jas. 2:17). If faith alone saves, then a dead faith saves! (Jas. 2:26), and who can believe that?

Jehovah's Witnesses and the "Higher Powers"

Irvin Himmel

No matter how corrupt a government may be, and no matter how wicked a civil ruler may be, the Christian must remain a law-abiding citizen. He must not promote lawlessness or anarchy. He obeys the laws of the land (unless they conflict with the laws of God), and he prays for kings and all that are in authority.

Christians have obligations to civil government. Paul addresses this matter in Romans 13:1-7. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." The "higher powers" under consideration are governmental rulers, civil authorities, or magistrates. God has ordained or arranged that there be such leaders, and Christians are to be subject to them.

God has not appointed a particular form of civil government. The obligation to submit to civil rulers applies whether we live under an absolute monarchy, a limited monarchy, a republic, a democracy, or some other kind of rule. Only when civil authority conflicts with the will of God are we justified in resisting governmental ordinances (Acts 5:29). Otherwise, "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation."

The civil ruler is the minister or servant of God for good. His right to govern is from God (John 19:11). He has authority to punish and reward. He "beareth not the sword in vain." He serves in the realm of operation assigned by God in exercising wrath on evil doers. He punishes those who do evil and praises such as do well (1 Pet. 2:13-14). Therefore, we are to

be subject and to pay tribute or taxes, to pay custom, and to show respect (Rom. 13:5-7).

No matter how corrupt a government may be, and no matter how wicked a civil ruler may be, the Christian must remain a law-abiding citizen. He must not promote lawlessness or anarchy. He obeys the laws of the land (unless they conflict with the laws of God), and he prays for kings and all that are in authority (1 Tim. 2:1-4). He can work for changes and improvements in government without violating the principles which regulate his behavior toward civil authority.

Charles T. Russell's Views

A religious movement which evolved into the modern Jehovah's Witnesses was launched by Charles T. Russell. In 1879, Russell began a weekly publication known as the *Watch Tower*. In 1844, he organized a publishing house which became known as the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. Russell's six volumes called *Millennial Dawn* were published (1886-1904). These volumes, later republished under the title



Charles T. Russell

Studies in the Scriptures, set forth the basic theology of Jehovah's Witnesses. Russell died in 1916. Four decades later the Witnesses recorded their history in a book called *Qualified to be Ministers*. That 1955 publication says, "Brother Russell surely proved to be a faithful witness of Jehovah" (312).

Russell taught that the "higher powers" in Romans 13:1 are governmental authorities. He wrote, "Evil as these Gentile governments have been, they were permitted or 'ordained of God' for a wise purpose (Rom. 13:1)" (*Millennial Dawn*, Vol. 1 [1886] 250). "Though the powers that be, the governments of this world, were ordained or arranged for by God, that mankind might gain a needed experience under them, yet the Church, the consecrated ones who aspire to office in the coming Kingdom of God, should neither covet the honors and the emoluments of office in the kingdoms of this world, nor should they oppose these powers" (266).

New Light in 1929



J.F. Rutherford

J.F. Rutherford succeeded Russell as President of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. After purging the organization of any who did not support him, he forged a strong central control or hierarchy. A prolific writer, he slowly made revisions in the teachings of the Watchtower Society. The name "Jehovah's Witnesses" was made official in 1931.

Beginning in 1929, the "higher powers" or "powers that be" in Romans 13 were no longer world governments or rulers of nations. They were rather "Jehovah and Christ Jesus." "*The Watchtower*, in June 1929, set forth for the first time the truth of and concerning the 'higher powers'" (*Jehovah*, 1934, 78). After

quoting Romans 13:1-3, Rutherford wrote, "These inspired words do not refer to the governments or rulers of the nations of earth . . . the 'higher powers' over such are Jehovah God and Christ Jesus" (*Riches*, 1936, 219). Again, Rutherford stated that the faithful followers of Christ "joyfully acknowledge Jehovah God and Christ Jesus as 'the Higher Powers,' to whom they must be subject (Romans 13:1)" (*Salvation*, 1939, 58).

Rutherford kept pressing this explanation, expecting his readers to believe it. "During the past few years those devoted to God and his King have fully recognized and acknowledged God and Christ Jesus as the only higher powers and that all Christians must obey God and Christ, regardless of opposition from man or man-made governments (Romans 13:1)" (*Religion*, 1940, 183-184).

Following Rutherford's death in 1942, a steady stream of books and tracts appeared under the copyright of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, without bearing the name of individual authors. Rutherford's strange interpretation of Romans 13:1-7 continued to be circulated after his death. In fact, it was considered "the Scriptural exposition" of that passage, as the following quotation shows: "In 1929 the clear light broke forth. That year *The Watchtower* published the Scriptural exposition of Romans chapter 13. It showed that Jehovah God and Christ Jesus, rather than worldly rulers or governors, are 'The Higher Powers' and that the Christian souls must 'obey God rather than men,' and that 'every ordinance of man' to which they must submit is every Scriptural ordinance of men who are servants within God's organization under the King Christ Jesus" (1 Pet. 2:13). This revelation of vital truth freed the spirits of God's consecrated



people as never before" ("The Truth Shall Make You Free," 1943, 312).

"Jehovah God is not the Founder of the kingdoms of this world nor the One responsible for them. It is a libel upon God and a reproach to His name for religious clergymen to solemnly teach that such worldly kingdoms are 'ordained of God' (Romans 13:1)" ("The Kingdom Is at Hand," 1944, 53). "The 'higher powers' mentioned at Romans 13:1-5 are the principal ruling factors of Almighty God's congregation, or the invisible governing body of the Kingdom of God . . . The 'higher powers' mentioned by the apostle are Jehovah God and Christ Jesus, and Christ Jesus is Jehovah's great Minister" ("Let God Be True," 1946, 242). "The Superior Authorities are the Most High God Jehovah and his exalted Son Jesus Christ. By Jehovah's own Theocratic arrangement these existing Authorities stand placed in their relative positions, first, God Supreme, and second, Jesus Christ his anointed King" ("This Means Everlasting Life," 1950, 197).

After quoting Romans 13:1, this statement was made: "Scripturally these words now apply to the heavenly 'superior authorities' of God's theocratic organization and not to worldly political powers like Nimrod and other totalitarian rulers" (*What Has Religion Done for Mankind?*, 1951, 292).

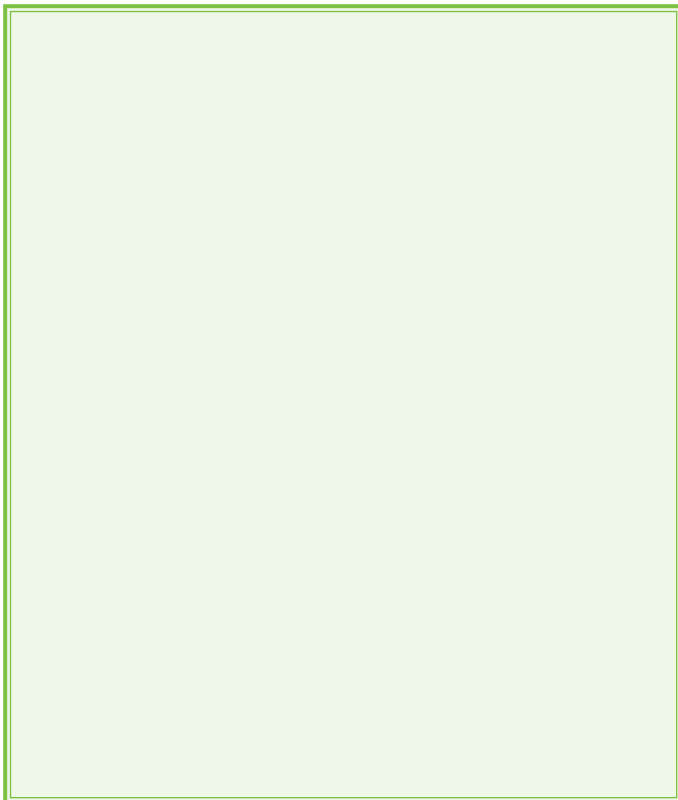
The Watchtower Society published its analysis of Romans 13:1-4 in a handbook designed to assist their people in door to door witnessing. "Let every soul be in subjection to the superior authorities [Jehovah God and Christ Jesus], for there is no authority except by God [only Christ Jesus and his theocratic organization recognized by God], the existing authorities [not political governments] stand placed in their respective positions by God [not 'divine

right of kings’]. Therefore he who ranges himself up against the authority [Christ Jesus] has taken a stand against the arrangement of God; those who have taken a stand against it will receive judgment to themselves [annihilation from Christ Jesus]” (“Make Sure of All Things,” 1953, 369).

Witnesses Reverse Themselves on Romans 13:1-7

After declaring that “clear light broke forth in 1929” and the “higher powers” were not rulers of nations or governmental officials, the Watchtower people decided to go back to the darkness prior to 1929. After proclaiming that the spirits of God’s consecrated people were “freed” as never before, they reverted to enslavement. After saying it is “libel upon God and a reproach to his name” to teach that worldly kingdoms are “ordained of God,” they decided to libel God and reproach his name by teaching that worldly kingdoms are “ordained of God.” After denying that the words of Romans 13:1 apply to “worldly political powers like Nimrod,” they decided to apply them in just that way. After all the publications that went forth expounding Rutherford’s peculiar interpretation of Romans 13:1-7, the Watchtower Society completely turned around in 1962 and taught what was emphatically denied in those publications. If the Witnesses are right on this matter now, they were wrong for years; if they were right then, they are wrong now!

Contrast the following quotations with the previous ones in this article. “The expression ‘superior authorities’ means



the political governments or authorities. . . . According to what the apostle Paul writes before these verses (Romans 13:1, 2) and after, it is plain that he means ‘authorities,’ not inside the ‘congregation of God,’ but outside the congregation and hence the political governmental authorities” (*Life Everlasting in Freedom of the Sons of God*, 1966, 189). “The first reason given by the apostle Paul for every Christian soul to be in subjection to the higher powers or ‘superior authorities’ was that ‘there is no authority except by God.’ . . . Certainly the political authorities have been permitted by God to exist from the days of Nimrod . . . By God’s permission more political governments exist today than ever before in human history—Romans 13:1” (192-193).

“Commenting on the attitude that a Christian should have toward the political governments, the apostle Paul said: ‘Let every soul be in subjection to the superior authorities, for there is no authority except by God.’ (Romans 13:1)” (*The Truth that Leads to Eternal Life*, 1968, 157). “When writing to Christians in Rome, the apostle Paul was inspired by God to discuss how they were to conduct themselves in relation to secular authorities . . . (Romans 13:1, 2)” (*True Peace and Security—From What Source?*, 1973, 135).

“As long as the governments of men exist, God requires that his servants be in subjection to these ‘superior authorities.’ Taxes should be paid to them. . . . Also, the laws of the government should be obeyed (Romans 13:1, 7; Titus 3:1) The only exception to this would be when obedience to the law would cause a person to disobey the law of God” (*You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*, 1982, 131).

After dogmatically denying for more than thirty years that the “powers that be” in Romans 13 are secular rulers or officials in political governments, Jehovah’s Witnesses were turned completely around by their leaders and expected to teach what they had been told for years to disavow. The Bible does not change in what it teaches, and it does not contradict itself. Such cannot be said of the Watchtower Society.

Did clear light break forth in 1929? If so, what kind of light broke forth in 1962 that brought back the pre-1929 understanding of Romans 13? Could it be that those fellows in the tower are not keeping watch but are tinkering with the light switch? Something is wrong. Careful up there in the tower! You may blow a fuse!

(Note: All books quoted in this article are in the possession of the writer. No statement has been taken out of context.)

2820 Hunterwood Dr., S.E., Decatur, Alabama 35603 irvidor@juno.com

Is God Miraculously Healing People Today?

Don R. Hastings

One of the best ways to expose that which is deceitful is to compare it with that which is genuine. Therefore, let us compare the so-called “miracles” today with the genuine miracles recorded in the Bible. Surely, those who boldly claim that they are miraculously healing people today by the power of God would not object to such a comparison. Truth has nothing to fear from investigation. Please consider, with an open mind, the differences between the true miracles recorded in the Bible and what is being called “miraculous healing” today.

1. Jesus, and others, healed “all kinds of disease” (Matt. 4:23; Acts 5:16). Faith healers do not attempt to miraculously heal those with diseases which can be seen; such as, measles, chickenpox, etc.

2. Jesus never failed to heal anyone. Faith healers admit that they are unable to heal many who come to them for healing.

3. The apostles only failed to heal once and Jesus blamed their lack of faith for this failure (Matt. 17:14-21). Faith healers blame their failures on the lack of faith on the part of those who desire to be healed.

4. Those in the Bible, who were miraculously healed, were healed instantly and completely (Luke 6:6-10; Mark 2:1-12). Faith healers often tell those, who they claimed to have miraculously healed, that they will be completely healed in a few days, or weeks, or months.

5. Jesus did not call upon those whom he healed to testify of their miraculous healing. Sometimes, he told those whom he healed not to tell others about it (Matt. 8:1-4). Faith healers will have long lines of people who testify how they were miraculously healed by them.

6. Neither Jesus, nor his apostles, advertised that great faith healers were coming to town. “Faith healers”

spend a lot of money promoting their wonderful power of healing.

7. Jesus never worked the crowd up into an excited, very emotional state of mind before performing a miracle. Faith healers use shouting and music to arouse the emotions of the audience before performing their acts of healing.

8. In the Bible, no one was ever paid for the miraculous power which God had given them (Acts 3:1-10). Faith healers are paid a lot of money! They have become rich by exploiting human suffering! Stop giving them money and you will see how quickly they lose interest in healing anyone!

9. The enemies of the Lord and his apostles admitted that they performed genuine miracles (John 11:47; Acts 4:16). Faith healers are deceitful workers for God has not given them the gift to miraculously heal as they often claim! Dr. William Nolen went to see Kathryn Kuhlman perform at one of her healing services. He wrote of his experience in trying to confirm that someone there had been miraculously healed by her. He wrote an article “In Search of a Miracle” which was published in *McCall's Magazine*, September, 1974. He wrote, “But because of my Roman Catholic background I was already convinced that faith played some role in healing and so I was certain I could approach the subject with an open mind. . . . Not once, in the hour and a half that Kathryn Kuhlman spent healing, did I see a patient with an obvious organic disease healed (i.e. a disease in which there is a structural alteration). . . . In talking to these people, I tried to be as honest, understanding, and objective as possible, but I couldn't dispense with my medical knowledge and my common sense. I listened carefully to everything they told me and followed up every lead that might have led to a confirmation of a miracle. I was led to an inescapable conclusion: Of the patients who had returned to Minneapolis to reaffirm the cures claimed

“Crucifixion” continued from front page

the uncertainty as to exactly how he was crucified, the answer may only ever come if some new archaeological evidence or piece of writing emerges from the shadows of the past, it says.

Response and Comments

Scripture shows that Jesus was indeed crucified in the very form and image in which his crucifixion typically is portrayed.

1. “And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS” (Matt. 27:37). If Jesus had been crucified upside down, Scripture would have said, “And they put under his head, not “up over his head.”

2. When Jesus needed a drink, a sponge was put on a stick and it was lifted up to his lips. “Immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and gave it to Him to drink” (Matt. 27:48; cf. John 19:29).

3. The fact that the soldiers sought to break the legs of the crucified ones may evidence the fact that their legs were not extended above their heads (John 19:33, 34). If their legs were thus extended, it would have been much more difficult to have broken their legs, thus indicating that their legs were nearer the ground.

4. Since a seat, the above article says, was designed to prolong life, the fact that Jesus died surprisingly early shows that he had no seat on the cross (Mark 15:44).

5. Perhaps some ancient crucifixions used cords rather than nails; maybe some had spikes driven through

at the miracles service, not one had, in fact, been miraculously cured of anything.”

10. Jesus possessed miraculous power over nature, material things, and death (Matt. 8:26; 14:15-21; John 11). Have you ever seen a so-called “miracle worker” stop a hurricane; walk on water; take a small amount of food and feed a great multitude; restore an amputated limb or raise the dead? No, and you never will!

God has given no one the power to perform miracles today! Those who claim to have such power are lying! They are servants of Satan — NOT God! Do not be deceived by them!

828 Cedar Knoll Dr., N., Lakeland, Florida 33809

their genitals, but Jesus had nails driven into his hands and feet (Luke 24:39; John 20:25, 27). He was “pierced,” not tied to the cross (Rev. 1:7). He was scourged by cords, but crucified with nails.

We may be assured that Jesus was crucified as the Bible says he was. More importantly, that instrument of his death is the power of our life. “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18). “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

4626 Osage, Baytown, Texas 77521

“Babe’s Dependence” continued from p. 2

Bethlehem and the star reappeared, guiding them to the house where Joseph and Mary were dwelling. The wise men worshiped the babe and presented their presents to him—gold, frankincense and myrrh.

God warned the wise men not to return to Herod so when they departed they went to their own country instead of returning to Jerusalem (Matt. 2:12). After the wise men had departed, the angel of the Lord instructed Joseph to take Mary and the child, flee from Bethlehem, and go to Egypt (Matt. 2:13). Mary and Joseph did as the angel instructed them. They remained in Egypt until after the death of Herod the Great.

When Herod saw that the wise men did not return to him, he was angry and sent soldiers to execute all of the babies under two years old, according to the time which the wise men indicated to him that the baby was born (Matt. 2:16). The paranoia and ruthless murder of children is in character with what secular history tells us about Herod the Great.

The psalm foretells the assault against the child’s life and that he would escape through reliance upon God. The Messiah, as an infant, did not resort to the use of his omnipotent power to effect his own deliverance, but trusted in God to deliver him. In the Psalm of the Cross, the Messiah looks back to the former deliverance to draw confidence that the God of heaven who saved him from Herod’s assault will deliver him while on the cross. However, he did not preserve him from death, but delivered him through resurrection from the dead.

6567 King’s Ct., Avon, Indiana 46123, mikewillis@indy.rr.net

