

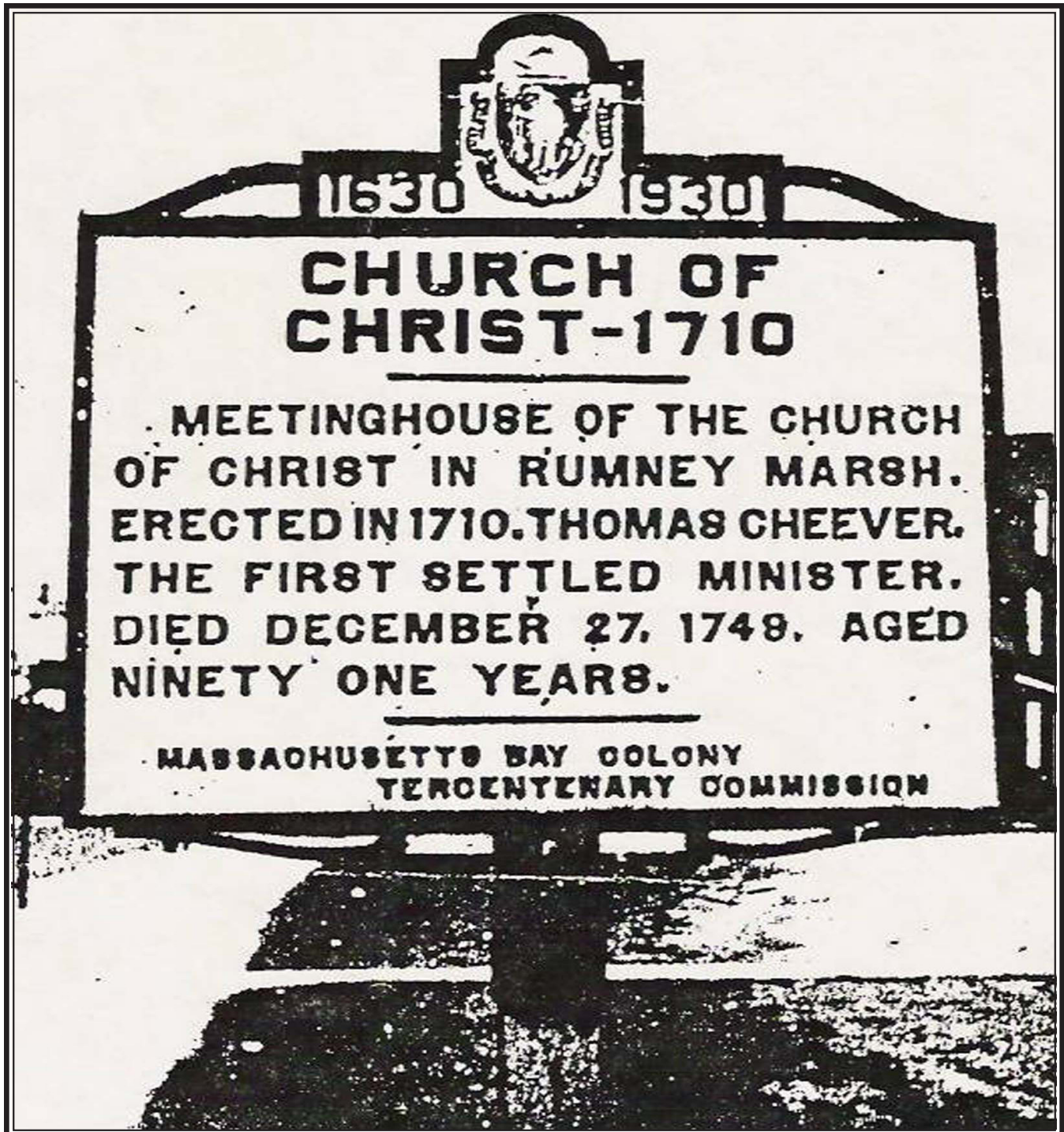
Back To Basics

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DID ALEXANDER CAMPBELL START THE CHURCH OF CHRIST?

Justin Monts

THE PICTURE ON THE FRONT COVER IS EVIDENCE OF A CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE MASSACHUSETTS BAY COLONY IN 1710. ALEXANDER CAMPBELL DID NOT COME TO THIS COUNTRY UNTIL 1809. THIS IS PROOF ALEXANDER CAMPBELL DID NOT START THE CHURCH OF CHRIST AS SOME ALLEGE.

1) **ALEXANDER CAMPBELL DID NOT START THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.** The church of Christ began in 30 AD on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38, 47). Campbell was born in 1788, long after the first century. Jesus Christ founded the church that bears His name. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus said, "I will build *my* church." God gave Him to be head over all things to the church which is His body (Eph. 1:22-23). Further, the Hebrew writer tells us that Jesus is the minister of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected and not man (Heb. 8:2). Since Jesus Christ erected His own church, Campbell could not have possibly started the church of Christ. The apostle Paul wrote in 58 AD, "The churches of Christ salute you" (Rom. 16:16).

2) **WHO WAS ALEXANDER CAMPBELL?** He was a well-known preacher and Bible student. He was also a delegate to the Virginia constitutional convention which led the state toward a more powerful executive branch of government. Incidentally, he was also the founder of Bethany College in Bethany, West Virginia. Campbell,

therefore, started a college; not a church. What role did he play in the Restoration Movement in America? He was just one among many pioneer preachers who sought to return to the Bible. Yet a man is never a standard (1 Cor. 4:6). Men can be wrong, but the Bible is right.

3) **ADDITIONAL PROOF THAT CAMPBELL DID NOT START THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.** Historical evidence continually surfaces that churches of Christ existed on American soil long before Campbell. On the front cover of this issue of *Back To Basics* is a photograph of a sign commemorating a church of Christ in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The local group met in 1710. The minister, Thomas Cheever, was born in 1658. Obviously, the church of Christ predates Campbell. And, according to the Bible, it predates even Cheever! If one is in a church that did not commence in 30 AD, he is in a church that does not belong to Christ. In which church are you found?

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DIGGING AGAIN OLD WELLS

John Isaac Edwards

Genesis 26:18 records, “And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names by which his father had called them.” Every generation is faced with the task of digging again old wells. Here are some old wells we need to be digging again.

1) THE OLD WELL OF BOOK, CHAPTER, AND VERSE PREACHING. It used to be that a preacher would often begin his sermon by saying, “I’ll give you book, chapter, and verse for everything that I say” and then proceed to do it. This old well seems to have been stopped in some places as some of the preaching being done contains very little Scripture. The appeal of the New Testament preachers was to the Scriptures. “Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture...” (Acts 8:35). Paul “reasoned...out of the scriptures” (Acts 17:30). This is an old well that needs to be digged again!

2) THE OLD WELL OF BIBLE AUTHORITY. Basic lessons in Bible authority—Our Need For Authority, False Standards of Authority, The True Standard of Authority, How To Establish Authority, Generic and Specific Authority, Expediency, The Silence of the Scriptures—used to be drilled into our hearts. How long has it been since you heard such teaching? If the well is stopped, you better get out your shovel and start digging, dear brother!

3) THE OLD WELL OF ONE TRUE CHURCH. There are folks who do not know the difference between the Lord’s church and denominationalism

because of a stopped well. We need to dig again the old well by pointing out what the Scriptures teach about the church of our Lord—the fact that there’s just one, its name, its work, its worship, its organizational arrangement, and so on.

I’m impressed how Isaac “digged again the wells of water...and called their names...” We don’t need any new wells today, nor do we need any new names for the old wells. As long as this Isaac is around, we shall continue to dig again the old wells within the pages of *Back To Basics* and “speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11).

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DESPISING AND DESPISED WOMEN

Melba Edwards

Sometimes we are despised by others. Sometimes we bring that upon ourselves and sometimes others have a problem with being despised. *Despise* means to make of no account; to regard as nothing; to treat with contempt; to think down upon or against anyone; dishonor; shame. There were some in the Bible who had a problem with being despised.

1) SARAI WAS DESPISED IN HAGAR’S EYES. We read about this incident in Genesis 16:1-6. When Sarai bore Abram no children, she gave her handmaid, Hagar, to Abram as a wife, that she might obtain children by her. Abram took Hagar and she conceived. When Hagar saw that she conceived, she despised Sarai. She no longer had the respect or honor for Sarai. Now she was able to bare Abram a child and Sarai was barren (Gen. 11:30). This caused problems between the two. Sarai dealt hardly with Hagar and she fled. The angel of the Lord told Hagar, “...Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands” (Gen. 16:9). She does return but it seems things were never the same, because later the bondwoman, Hagar was cast out (Gen. 21:10). Sometimes we think we are making a wise choice and someone comes along only to despise us. We need to be careful we aren’t a despising woman like Hagar.

2) MICHAL DESPISED DAVID. We can read about this situation in 2 Samuel 6:12-23. David brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom, with gladness. He sacrificed oxen and fatlings. “And David

danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet. And as the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal Saul’s daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart” (2 Sam. 6:14-16). When David returned to bless his household, Michal came out to meet him and spoke despising words (v. 20). She had no child unto the day of her death (v. 23). From this text we learn despise is in one’s heart. She did not honor David as she once had. She had loved him (1 Sam. 18:20). Now she despised him, or treated him with shame and dishonor. Her attitude had changed toward David. If we are like Michal, we need to learn to “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23).

To be filled with scorn and despise someone would be an awful thing. If we have a problem despising, we need to get rid of it. It is a heart issue. We need to ask God to, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (Ps. 51:10). We need to give our attention to studying God’s word. “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Ps. 119:11). We need to realize it is a sin to despise. “He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth...” (Prov. 14:21). On the other hand, we need to try our best not to cause someone to despise us. “...Let no man despise thee” (Ti. 2:15). If we are despised, pray for them (Mt. 5:44).

WHY WE BELIEVE

by
Joe Corley

Was Jesus of Nazareth a mythical character invented by writers of the gospels? A few think so, but in so doing they merely display their ignorance of the facts. That He was a real person is attested to, not only by such credible witnesses as the gospel writers, but secular historians as well. Josephus, though not a disciple of Jesus, nevertheless refers to Him in his renown history of the Jews (*Works of Josephus*). Tacitus, a Roman historian of the first century, refers to him as a real person. The calendar is a testimony of this fact also. A.D. 2007 means "In the year of our Lord, 2007." The existence of Christianity testifies to its originator, Jesus Christ.

1) WE BELIEVE IN JESUS BECAUSE OF CREDIBLE WITNESSES. There was not just one witness of Jesus, but several. Their combined testimony is consistent. If they invented Jesus, then we are faced with the glaring question of WHY? They had nothing to gain, and everything to lose by doing so. They were certainly facing unbelievable odds against success if their testimony was a lie. Why would they be willing to die for their claim if it was not true? Moreover, how could they have invented such a man with such sublime teaching? Water cannot rise above its level. They were not learned philosophers, but mostly common people with little formal education. Luke and Paul, though better educated, were not capable of producing such. Even world renown philosophers had never come close to such teaching. Were the gospel writers honestly deceived then? But they were not gullible men. Jesus often rebuked them for their slowness to believe. Yet they became thoroughly convinced that Jesus was the Christ.

2) WE BELIEVE JESUS WAS WHO HE SAID

HE WAS – THE SON OF GOD. Some say He was a good man but not who He claimed to be. How could He be a *good* man if He was an imposter? Either He was who He claimed to be or He was a liar and a fraud. His very **life** is evidence of who He was! Who has ever been able to find evidence of sin in His life? His **works** prove Him to be the Son of God. John said, "Truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (Jn. 20:30-31).

3) WE BELIEVE IN JESUS BECAUSE OF THE FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY. The Old Testament prophets who lived and wrote from about 500 B.C. to 1500 B.C. spoke of the coming Messiah. Among other things, they told the place and manner of His birth (Micah 5:2; Is. 7:14), His lineage (Is. 11:1-2), His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Zech. 9:9), His kingdom (Is. 9:6-7), His rejection and atoning sacrifice (Is. 53), His crucifixion (Ps. 22), that He would be pierced (Zech. 12:10), yet no bones would be broken (Ps. 34:19-22), there would be wounds in His hands (Zech. 13:6), His disciples would be scattered (Zech. 13:7), He would be raised from the dead (Ps. 16:8-11), and ascend to God (Dan. 7:13-14). Jesus fulfilled all these, and many others, minutely! The odds of any one person *accidentally* fulfilling all these prophecies is astronomical. It simply could not have happened accidentally! The fact that Jesus fulfilled them all proved He was the promised Messiah, and establishes His claim to be the Son of God!

We believe in Jesus because of the consequences of NOT believing. Jesus said, "...for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (Jn. 8:24).

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WHY SOME ARE NOT CHRISTIANS

Glenn E. Phillips

There are many reasons why individuals in today's society are not Christians. It can be said that some are not Christians because...

1) SOME SEE NO NEED TO BE. Some people take the position that being a Christian is not essential in their lives, and thus neglect and reject God's word (Heb. 2:1-3). By being involved in so many things such as worldly affairs, social status, and pleasing one's self, becoming a Christian is the last thing on a lot of people's mind. We must, however, remember that all have sinned (Rom. 3:23) and that justification comes through Christ (Rom. 6:23).

2) SOME ARE DECEIVED IN THINKING THEY ALREADY ARE CHRISTIANS. Some are not Christians because they have the false idea that they already are Christians. Yet the Bible makes it clear what one must do to become a Christian (hear, believe, repent, confess Christ, and be baptized into Christ). The denominational world has done a good job in having men and women believe that a Christian can be anyone of any faith. This teaching is practiced without divine authority (Col. 3:17; 2 Jn. 9). The Bible clearly teaches that one can be lost due to their unbelief in the gospel of Christ (2 Cor. 4:3-4). Paul told the Thessalonians that there would be those who would perish because they received not the love of the truth, but rather had pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Th. 2:10-12).

3) SOME ARE DISGUSTED BY THOSE WHO PROFESS TO BE CHRISTIANS. Jesus said, in Matthew 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." As disciples of Christ, or Christians (Acts 11:26), we should be

out in the world glorifying our Father by doing what He says to do and how He says to do it (Jn. 14:15; 15:14). As Christians, we have to be careful in our everyday lives. We cannot afford to do things or practice habits that one would question by saying, "You mean to tell me that is what being a Christian is all about!" Many in the church would be disgusted with the attitude displayed by Diotrophes (3 Jn. 9-11). Ask yourself, "Am I the Diotrophes in the local church?"

4) SOME LACK FAITH IN CHRIST. Many are not Christians because they simply lack faith in Christ, and without faith you cannot please God (Heb. 11:6). Jesus made it clear that faith in Him is essential to salvation (Mk. 16:16). In becoming a Christian, one must hear the gospel preached (Rom. 10:17), then he must believe it (Rom. 1:16). One must then repent of sins as Jesus stated in Luke 13:3, "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." The individual must confess his faith in Christ (Rom. 10:9-10). He or she must be added to the Lord's church – this takes place at the point of baptism (Acts 2:38-41, 47). Baptism is essential to salvation as Jesus taught in Mark 16:16. Once one has followed the commandments given by our Lord, he or she will be a Christian, a child of God, a disciple of Christ.

Although the reasons above may be true as to why so many people are not Christians, they cannot change Jesus' words, nor the responsibility to heed and obey His commandments (Jn. 12:48; Heb. 5:8-9).

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CAIN AND ABEL AND THE GENERATIONS OF ADAM

Shane Williams

In Genesis 4, we read about the first children born to Adam and Eve. Their names were *Cain* and *Abel*. Cain was a tiller of the ground and his brother, Abel, was a shepherd. The first thing we are told about them, other than their occupation, is regarding their offering to the Lord.

1) **WORSHIP.** We are not told in Genesis 4:3-5 what exactly constituted acceptable worship. However, we do know that Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and their fat portions (Gen. 4:4). The Lord had regard for Abel and his offering. Cain, however, brought an offering of the fruit of the ground (Gen. 4:3). The Lord had no regard for his offering (Gen. 4:5). Let us not think that God just chose at random what He wanted to accept! The Hebrew writer tells us that Abel's offering was "by faith" (Heb. 11:4). We know that faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17), so God had expressed to them what was acceptable. Let us be certain that our own worship to God is "by faith" and not a matter of our own personal preference.

2) **REJECTION AND PUNISHMENT.** The Bible gives us some reasons why Cain's sacrifice was unacceptable. From God's conversation with Cain (Gen. 4:6-7), we learn that he did not do what was right. Abel's offering was "by faith" and, therefore, a better sacrifice than Cain's (Heb. 11:4). John points out that the reason Cain killed his brother was because "his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous" (1 Jn. 3:12). With Cain being so angry over Abel's accepted offering, Cain murders him while they are in the field together. There were severe consequences to his actions. God told him that the ground would no

longer yield its strength to Cain (remember his occupation) and that he would be a fugitive and a wanderer (Gen. 4:12). Further punishment can be seen in verse 16, "Then Cain went out from the presence of the Lord..." Sin separates us from God (Is. 59:2), and, if we do not turn back to God, there will be an eternal separation (Mt. 25:41, 46; 2 Th. 1:9).

3) **SKILLED MAN.** After Cain settled in the land of Nod, he built a city (Gen. 4:17) and named it after his son, Enoch. Jabel was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock (Gen. 4:20). His brother, Jubal, was the father of the harp and flute (Gen. 4:21). Tubal-Cain was one who forged all kinds of tools out of bronze and iron (Gen. 4:22). We learn that man was created with intelligence and not as primitive beings.

4) **ENOCH AND METHUSELAH.** There are ten generations between Adam and Noah that come from the line of Seth. Other than Noah, we are told only a little about a few of them. Enoch "walked with God" and did not see death (Gen. 5:22, 24; Heb. 11:5). The Hebrew writer tells us that he was "pleasing to God." He was also a prophet and talked of God's punishment on the ungodly (Jude 14-15). Methuselah will forever be remembered as the man who lived the longest (969 years). With his father being a prophet, it should not be a surprise that his name has meaning. Some scholars record his name as meaning, "He dies and it is sent." Interestingly, Methuselah died in the same year in which the flood came.

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BASIC INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

Bob Waldron

If ever the word “unique” is used in its most exact sense, it is in the statement that the Bible is a *unique* book. It is the only book we possess that was given to us from God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). It was not given to us at once as a complete book, but was written and assembled throughout many centuries. In this article, I want to give some fundamental facts about the Bible and some guidance in the study of the Bible.

THE CANON

The canon refers to the list of books considered to be inspired. Of course, there is a lot of talk today about “lost gospels” and “apocryphal books.” Most of this talk comes from those who completely reject any idea that the Scriptures are inspired of God. Their emphasis on “other books” is designed to dilute and set aside the inspired books we do have. The question therefore arises, “How do we know what books belong in the canon?” This question was really settled in the days of inspiration. The Old Testament was written in a time when the people knew the writers, and knew whether the books they received were

inspired or not. The Scriptures were written for God’s people, by inspired men, and God’s people knew these inspired men and accepted their writings as coming from God. The same process occurred in the New Testament as well. No council ever determined which books were inspired. Rather, such councils merely recognized and ratified what the synagogues and churches and people had already determined.

SIXTY-SIX BOOKS

What we call the “books” of the Bible were originally scrolls, some of them quite small, both in the Old Testament and in the New. These scrolls, or books, were written by about forty different writers, from Moses to John. Though the narrative found in the Bible reaches back to the beginning of time, the writing of the account took between c. 1450 B.C. and A.D. 100. The Old Testament is comprised of 39 books, and if one looks at the table of contents at the beginning of the Old Testament, he can see what these 39 books are. The first 17 books are the books of the Law (5 of them) and the books of history (12 of them), and even though the first five books are

the Law (or the Torah), there is nevertheless very much narrative in them. The interesting fact is that the other 22 books in the Old Testament all happened or were written during the time of the first 17 books. The New Testament consists of 27 books, four books setting forth the facts of the gospel and one book giving the record of the work of the apostles. The rest of the New Testament is letters, even Revelation, though it is also a book of prophecy.

THE NARRATIVE

One of the most amazing things about the Bible is that though it was written over such a long period, by so many writers, it nevertheless tells one story, a narrative that begins in Genesis and ends in Revelation. The Old Testament part of this narrative was finished many years before Jesus came to the earth. Therefore, the only one who could have tailored it to fit Him was God. Without the New Testament, the Old Testament is an unsolved puzzle, an unanswered question. The New Testament, without the Old, loses its power, its roots, and its foundations. Only by inspiration could two great works as these have been written independently of each

other and yet fit so perfectly that either one is incomplete without the other.

IMPORTANCE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Many people, in their study of the Bible, either completely ignore the Old Testament, or greatly minimize its importance. That it is quoted so often by Jesus and by the New Testament writers shows the prominence of the Old Testament record in their thinking. One must also remember that the same verse that says “all scripture is inspired” also says “and is profitable” (2 Tim. 3:16). Therefore, to reject the profitability of the Old Testament is to reject its inspiration. One of the great differences between the Bible and books such as the Koran is that in the Old Testament God provides a testimony to His promises, His prophecies, and His deeds throughout the centuries (Ps. 78:5). This track record establishes all of the essential characteristics of God, His grace, His mercy, His goodness, His righteousness, His power, and His truthfulness. The promise of God in Genesis 3:15 creates the expectation of one who is coming, and the narrative of the Bible tells how it all came to pass. Never once is the theme of the Coming One lost. Nothing is forgotten, no promise neglected. Themes, and sub-themes are all remembered and consistently dealt with.

Nothing can explain such unity and consistency except by the divine origin of the Bible. For the reader who does not know, there are a couple of situations in the Old Testament that can confuse. First, once one has read Genesis and the first 19 chapters of Exodus, he must realize that this narrative continues through the rest of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, but it is scattered through and interspersed with the law. It takes a little looking to find the narrative. Secondly, the narrative that begins in Genesis continues in sequence through 2 Kings. Since 1 Chronicles follows 2 Kings, one might assume that the story continues in it, but these books constitute the only parallel account in the Old Testament. Therefore 1 Chronicles through 2 Chronicles repeats much of the story already told in 1 Samuel through 2 Kings. Most of the story of 1 Samuel, however, is not repeated in 1 Chronicles. Only the last story in 1 Samuel, the death of Saul, is found in 1 Chronicles, and it is not found until chapter 10. The rest of 1 Chronicles is parallel to 2 Samuel.

THE MESSAGE

The book of Genesis is the weaver’s beam to which all the great threads are fastened to be woven into the tapestry of the plan of salvation. Chapter one is not written primarily to tell us how the world began, but to tell

us who God is, and subsequently, again and again, the people of God identify Him to their pagan neighbors as the God who made “the sea and the dry land” (Jonah 1:9; Acts 14:15; 17:24). There is not only the message of One who is coming, but also the message of redemption. Salvation was needed because man sinned, and paradise on earth was lost. The Bible also tells us the concept of and the need for holiness, and how God provides for our transformation from the way of sin to the way of righteousness. Not only does forming our relationship with God involve forgiveness but also reformed living. One of the great themes that God emphasizes is relationships. He does not desire casual relationships. He has dealt with men through covenants, and though the terms and details of those covenants have varied through the centuries, the relationship involved between God and man has not. From the beginning of the Bible to the end, this relationship is: “I will be your God, and you will be my people.” Properly understood, these words sum up the arrangement between God and His children. He will be our God to bless us, to teach us, to show us what life is, and we will be His children to love Him, to walk in His ways, and to let Him live in us.

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NOAH'S ARK AND THE FLOOD

Don Wright

In the early pages of man's history, sin ran rapidly through the world because of unions formed between the godly and the ungodly. We are told in Genesis 6:2 that the sons of God (descendants of Seth) took the daughters of men (descendants of Cain) as wives. This intermixing of the sons of God with the daughters of men led to spiritual and moral decadence and finally produced an immoral society so bad that God determined to destroy the world by an universal flood (Gen. 6:5-7). The destruction of the world by flood would not mean the end of mankind because Noah found favor with God and would be saved by way of an ark that God instructed him to build (Gen. 6:8-22). There are many lessons that can be learned from Noah's ark and the flood, from God's intolerance of sin, to God's willingness to extend grace. But in this brief article I want to compare the ark to the church of our Lord. If Noah and his family were to survive the great flood, they would have to be in the ark. That's where all the saved would be located. This is also true today in regard to the church. The church is God's ark of safety today (Acts 2:47). Let's look at some comparisons between the ark and the church.

1) LIKE THE ARK, THERE IS ONLY ONE CHURCH. The Lion couldn't say to the bear, "I don't like this ark. I think I'll wait for another one to come along." There would not be another. Noah only built one ark. Likewise, Jesus only built one church (Mt. 16:18; Eph. 4:4). If a person is going to escape the wrath of God, he must get into the one church built by Jesus and revealed in the New Testament.

2) LIKE THE ARK, THE CHURCH HAS ONLY ONE ENTRANCE. Noah was instructed to build a single door in the side of the ark (Gen. 6:16). Ev-

eryone that boarded the ark entered the same door. Likewise, there is only one entrance into the church. One must enter the door by obeying the gospel (Rom. 1:16). The gospel demands belief in Christ (Mk. 16:16), repentance of sin (Lk. 13:3), confession with the mouth (Rom. 10:9-10) and a burial in baptism (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27). There is no other way to get into the one church Christ built other than obedience to the instructions of the gospel.

3) LIKE THE ARK, THERE ARE MORE CLEAN THAN UNCLEAN IN THE CHURCH. In Genesis 7:2, we find Noah being instructed to take more clean animals into the ark than the unclean. In the church, there are more clean saints too. Are there sinners in the church? Yes! But the truth is the church is composed of the best people in the world. People who are blood-bought and transformed into the image of God's Son. And these people, for the most part, are doing everything they can to live good, morally upright lives by walking in the light (1 Jn. 1:5-7). Don't let a few hypocrites in the church cause you to form a negative opinion about a group of people who are mostly honest, sincere saints doing their best to make it to heaven.

4) LIKE THE ARK, THE CHURCH IS DURABLE. The ark survived the violence of the flood (Gen. 7:23). The church has and will continue to survive all the assaults of Satan and his earthly ministers (Dan. 2:44; Heb. 12:28). Christians sometimes worry too much about what is going to happen to the church in these wicked and sinful times. The church is going to be just fine because it is God's divine institution and under His protection.

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THE SCATTERING OF THE PEOPLE

Mike Noble

After the world-wide flood, Noah's descendants were "separated into their lands, everyone according to his own language...into their nations." While the 10th chapter of Genesis describes in detail this division, we are not left to think that it happened overnight. Actually, a 100-year period of time existed where men remained united in one region with "one language and one speech" (Gen. 11:1). How, then, did the people come to be scattered? Genesis 11 provides us with the information.

1) **THE SEPARATION OF THE NATIONS.** It was during the days of Peleg (Gen. 10:25) that the entire race of man, having journeyed east, settled "in the land of Shinar," between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers (modern day Iraq). Immediately the people set out to build for themselves "a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens" (Gen. 11:4). Their motive was plainly stated: "...lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."

Their intention, of course, was in complete rebellion to the LORD's command to "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (Gen. 9:1). Consequently, the LORD, in His infinite wisdom, confused their language that they might be unable to "understand one another's speech" (v. 7). While the Scriptures do not provide much detail about this, it must have been quite the scene! Picture, if you can, a tower bricklayer on one day saying to his companion (in understandable terms), "Hand me another brick" – but then the next day the same two people not being able to understand each other because they each now speak a different language! What confusion this truly must have caused! Thus, the city came to be called "Babel," which means confusion.

Beloved, this was a seminal moment in the history of man, as the people with their differing languages "ceased building the city" and "scattered... over the face of all the earth" (Gen. 11:8). Here was the genesis (beginning) of this world's languages, nations, and cultures.

2) SOME PRACTICAL LESSONS.

The Power Of Unity. The people were united in their purpose, and the LORD acknowledged their strength, saying, "Now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them" (Gen. 11:6). Of course, their motive was evil. The Lord wants His people today to be united in Him for good (Jn. 17:20-23).

Confusion Can Be A Good Thing. "God is not the author of confusion" when men are seeking Him (1 Cor. 14:33); but God does work confusion among those who would rebel against His will (See Judges 7 and 2 Chronicles 20:23 for further illustrations of this). We ought to pray that God would confound any united effort (even if it involves ourselves) that is not in harmony with His will.

God's Purposes Will Prevail. Man can plot and scheme and build all the "towers" he wants, but God's plans will not be thwarted. Truly, "He who sits in the heavens shall laugh" at the devising of men (Ps. 2:4).

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BACK TO BASICS
BACK TO THE BIBLE

THE PATRIARCHS: ABRAHAM (PART 1)

David Eldridge

The word “Patriarch” comes from the Greek word *patriarches* meaning father. Generally, this term is applied to the heads of the family prior to the giving of the Law of Moses. One of the greatest men during the Patriarchal Dispensation is Abraham (Heb. 7:4).

1) ABRAHAM WAS A MAN OF FAITH.

While not the most talked about trial of his faith, the call of God for Abraham to leave his home is well worth noting. Abraham was 75-years-old when God told him, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee” (Gen. 12:1). Imagine being asked to leave behind all you knew to travel to an unknown destination. The Hebrew writer speaks of this act, saying, “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb 11:8-10).

2) ABRAHAM, FROM UR TO CANAAN.

Abraham obeys the call of God and departs from Ur of the Chaldees to journey towards Canaan. Before this sojourn begins, God promises Abraham, “And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:2-3). Later, while in the land of Canaan, “the Lord appeared unto Abram,

and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him” (Gen. 12:7). God keeps His promises! The “nation promise” was fulfilled by the Egyptian captivity when Abraham’s descendants, “seventy souls” (Ex. 1:5), went down into Egypt, but those that left were “about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children” (Ex. 12:37). God’s “land promise” was fulfilled in the conquest of the land by Joshua and the children of Israel. Joshua wrote, “There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass” (Josh. 21:45).

3) ABRAHAM, FROM CANAAN TO EGYPT.

The record states, “And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land” (Gen. 12:10). Abraham was concerned that because Sarah was “a fair woman to look upon” that when the Egyptians saw her they would say, “This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive” (Gen. 12:12). He begged her to say only that she was his sister. The princes of Pharaoh saw Sarah and told him about her. Pharaoh gave Abraham “sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels” for Sarah (Gen. 12:16). However, because Sarah was Abraham’s wife, “The Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues” (Gen. 12:17). Pharaoh was upset that Abraham had not revealed the truth that Sarah was his wife. He quickly sent Abraham, Sarah, and all they had on their way.

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GOD SAID IT LONG BEFORE

by
Arnold O. Schnabel

Knowledge of the evidences of Christianity is essential to each of God's children. Without knowledge of the reasonable credentials of the gospel, our faith will lack conviction and reality, and our ministry will not carry the necessary zeal and diligence. As small children, we accept unquestioningly our parent's faith, as do young children of all faiths. Now, our God demands that "we be ready always to give answer to the unbeliever that asks us a reason concerning our hope of eternal life" (1 Pet. 3:15).

Too few Christians realize the burden of proof falls upon the one who states, "There is a God and the Bible is His revelation of Himself to us." The denial of the unbelievers cannot be proved, but in reality the challenge is for the believer to "prove his statement." God has not handicapped this generation but has given us ample evidence of His existence, His nature, and His speaking to us through men in the past.

The purpose of this series, *God Said It Long Before*, therefore, is to accredit the testimony of the writers of the Bible. A person's faith can be founded on the fact that their written record is a reliable and faithful witness, both historically and scientifically. The integrity of the Bible stands on the proven integrity of its writers.

IF there is a God who is supreme over our universe, and IF the Bible is a revelation from that God, then there is ONE essential that must be inherent within that revelation. It must be constituted solely of TRUTHS! It is an absolute necessity, then, those statements of Bible writers, when prophesying concerning national

events, or when their writings relate to physical laws of this universe, all must coincide perfectly with accepted facts of science and history, but not necessarily theories. Furthermore, Bible statements must do this regardless of the accepted theories and level of scientific knowledge of the age in which they were written.

This series will demonstrate; that between the observations of science and history, there exists a harmony with the simple and direct interpretation of the Bible narrative, such as would be expected of a book having the same Author as the physical world. If you can be shown proof of this statement, then truly you have seen beyond any doubt a miracle in this scientific age as unexplainable as any recorded in the Bible. It is beyond comprehension that men who lived 2000 to 4000 years ago could, without this age's scientific instruments, arrive at the same knowledge as the men of science have in the last three hundred years.

Modern instruments of research make possible our great advancements in science. So it is machine technology that allows us to broaden our knowledge beyond that of our forefathers. Leeuwenhoek's invention of the microscope in 1676; the use of shock waves in the study of the ocean floor, the world's largest radio telescope commencing operation in November of 1963, these and countless other tools, have provided discoveries of the universe's secrets that otherwise would have been impossible for the unaided human mind to search out.

I look forward to providing the readers of *Back to Basics* the proof God has provided this modern age that the Bible is His inspired truth and words.

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Kids Activity Page

Aleisha Edwards

Who Am I?

People of the New Testament



- 1) I ate locusts and wild honey (Mk. 1:6). _____
- 2) I betrayed Jesus with a kiss (Mt. 26:47-49). _____
- 3) I wasted my possessions with riotous living (Lk. 15:13). _____
- 4) I invited others to hear Jesus (Jn. 4:28-29). _____
- 5) I was taught the Scriptures as a child (2 Tim. 3:15). _____
- 6) I persecuted Christians before my conversion (Acts 9:1). _____
- 7) I denied Jesus three times (Mk. 14:72). _____
- 8) I ran to teach a eunuch from Ethiopia (Acts 8:30). _____
- 9) I replaced Judas as an apostle (Acts 1:24-26). _____
- 10) I died on the cross for all mankind (Jn. 19). _____

**"Suffer the little children to come unto me,
and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14).**

FLY YOUTHFUL LUSTS

Jeremy Sweets

Paul admonishes Timothy to “flee youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace” (2 Tim. 2:22). Youthful lusts are a great danger that must be avoided at all costs. The young are not to merely go the other direction. They must flee as if their life depended upon it. The Christian must pursue godliness instead. A great example of one who fled youthful lusts was Joseph. When the wife of Joseph’s master tried to lie with him, he refused and chose purity instead.

1) **JOSEPH’S SUSCEPTIBILITY.** It was not easy for Joseph to do what was right. Many people would have sinned if they were in his place. First, notice that the Lord was with Joseph so that he became a successful man (Gen. 39:2-3). While this may seem like a deterrent from sin, many have fallen victim to earthly success. In the midst of a successful military campaign (2 Sam. 8-10), David brazenly sinned with Bathsheba and murdered her husband (2 Sam. 11). After Uzziah, a king of Judah, was blessed by God, he became proud and acted unfaithfully (2 Chron. 26:16). Success breeds arrogance, and we must guard against sin at those times (1 Cor. 10:12). Second, Joseph could have escaped detection from those around him. He was entrusted with everything in the house by his master (Gen. 39:4-6). At one point, Joseph was left alone in the house with the master’s wife (Gen. 39:11). Even if no one else found out, Joseph recognized that he was in God’s presence (Gen. 39:9; Ps. 139:1-12). Third, Joseph was a young man. Many people use youth as an excuse to sin. However, youth should be a time of devotion to God and dedication to purity (Ecc. 12:1; Ps. 119:9). Despite Joseph’s susceptibility, he refused to sin against God.

2) **JOSEPH’S STAND.** Joseph made a true stand for the Lord. When Potipher’s wife requested that Joseph lie with her, he simply refused, explaining that such action was a great evil and sin against God (Gen. 39:8-9). He did not yield to sin to impress her. He was not embarrassed. He simply stated that it was sin. Joseph overcame more than her initial request. She repeatedly enticed Joseph, but he continued to refuse. His resolve to obey God could not be diminished. Finally, she grabbed his garment and tried to physically make him lie with her. The time for talk was over. Joseph fled, leaving the garment in her hand. He removed himself completely from the temptation.

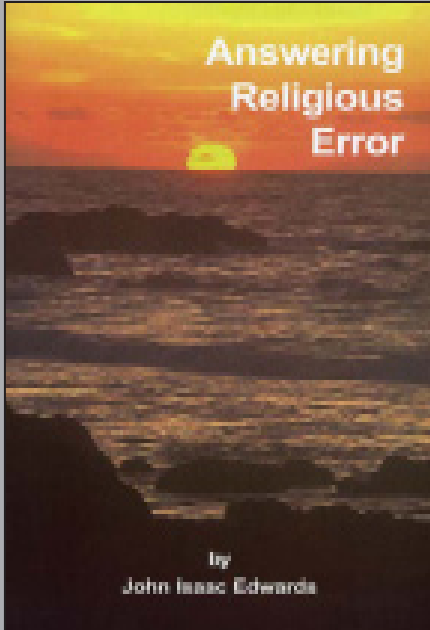
3) **JOSEPH’S SUFFERING.** Even though Joseph did what was right, he had to endure suffering for his decision to serve God. He experienced a loss of reputation. Potipher’s wife claimed that Joseph tried to rape her (Gen. 39:13-15). Although this was untrue, others may have believed such a lie. Joseph also experienced a loss of position. He was entrusted with all that was in the house. However, his trust and position were removed. Joseph also lost his freedom. He was treated like a common criminal and thrown into jail by Potipher (Gen. 39:20). Today, Christians may also suffer for doing what is right (2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 4:15-16).

When Joseph was presented with the opportunity to fulfill his lusts, he chose purity and obedience to God. Let us make the same decision when we are faced with lusts today.

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