



Why I Believe Jesus Rose From the Dead

Heath Rogers

The historical fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the very basis for the truth of Christianity. The resurrection of Jesus Christ and Christianity either stand or fall together. Jesus himself risked everything upon his resurrection. Twice, when asked for a sign, he gave his future resurrection as evidence that he was who he claimed to be (Matt. 12:38-40; John 2:19-22).

If Jesus failed to come forth from the grave the third day after his death, he would have been proven to be a fraud — either a liar or a lunatic. But, if his tomb was found empty, then he would be “declared to be the Son of God with

power” (Rom. 1:4).

Christianity is a system of faith. We accept it by faith. However, it is not a leap of faith. Everything we believe in is based upon good, solid evidence; including the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. What historical evidence supports the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Why do I believe Jesus rose from the dead?

THE WAY HE DIED

One argument against the resurrection is the “Swoon Theory.” This theory suggests that Jesus didn’t die on the cross, that he only appeared to be dead.

Due to pain, shock, and loss of blood Jesus lost consciousness. He was taken from the cross and placed in Joseph’s tomb where he later revived and somehow managed to escape the sealed tomb.

The Bible states that Jesus died (1 Cor. 15:3-4). His death was the result of crucifixion. This means of death itself disproves the “swoon theory.”

History records no survivors of crucifixion. The Roman sol-
see “Jesus Rose” on p. 472



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Honor To Whom Honor Is Due

Mike Willis

Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour (Rom. 13:7).

John Smith graduated from high school in 1963. He left his rural home town in East Texas and moved to work for one of the chemical plants just south of Houston. He earned a good living for his family working at this chemical plant. After working for them for 33 years, he retired from the chemical plant. His company gave him a retirement party and a pension that included such benefits as medical insurance for the rest of his life.



In contrast to John, his brother Bill decided to devote his life to preaching the gospel. Bill went away for college at one of the schools operated by brethren. After graduating from college, he began full-time located preaching. Though there were many gratifying things associated with preaching, there were also many disappointments along the way. At one church, he preached a sermon that upset a prominent brother in the church; as a result, he had to move when his daughter was in her senior year of high school. On another occasion, brethren thought they just needed a change; he had to uproot his family and move again. After preaching the gospel for fifty-five years, the church with which he was working announces they will not need him after the first of the year. So long and goodbye!

In both cases, the person described is fictional, although both are written to describe very real experiences that specific individuals have. They are written in such generic terms that they fit the real life experiences of many employees at plants and many preachers. I am writing about this because I believe that how we treat those who devote their lives to preaching the gospel is going to affect the quality of men who choose to preach in the future.

About twenty years ago, a church in Texas decided to get rid of their local preacher. I don't know the circumstances involved or very many of the details, so I am not in a position to pass judgment on what caused the problem. However, the decision to get rid of him meant upsetting his life again as he

see "Honor" on p. 473

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The Place

Connie W. Adams

The book of Deuteronomy is a restatement of the law of Moses addressed to the children of those who were the original recipients of the law. Moses spoke to a generation which had endured the wilderness wanderings and which was about to enter the land of Canaan. When they entered the land they were to destroy the altars, groves, and high places where idols were worshiped. Such places were not to be used for the worship of Jehovah. Several times in Deuteronomy 12, Moses stressed the importance of carrying out divine service “in the place” which God would choose.

“But unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come” (v. 5). “Then there shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you” (v. 11). “Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest: but in the place which the Lord shall choose in one of your tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee” (vv. 13-14).

No COMPROMISE

There was to be no synthesizing of divine worship with idolatry. No “union meetings” were to be held to seek better “communication.” There was to be none of this business of “You go to your altar and I’ll go to mine.” Israel was to understand that since God was the object of their worship, he alone had the right to prescribe the nature, order, and even the place of it. When the temple was built by Solomon, God promised to put his name there. Until then, his presence hovered over the mercy seat in the most holy place of the tabernacle. In the time of Jeroboam, when the kingdom divided, rival altars were set up at Dan and Bethel to cater to the convenience of the people and to alienate their affections from Jerusalem, the very place where the temple stood and where God put his name. Even in the time of Jesus, the Samaritan woman knew that the Jews said “that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship” (John 4:20). Jesus pointed her to the time of his kingdom, soon to be established, in which geographic place would not be bound, though a spiritual place (relationship) would be required so that God might be worshiped “in spirit and in truth.”

THE CHURCH — GOD’S PLACE OF SALVATION

The church is a spiritual relationship into which those who obey the gospel enter. Prior to that change, they are in the world of darkness, and are servants of the devil. Upon hearing, believing, and obeying the gospel, they then are “translated into the kingdom of his dear son” (Col. 1:13). They are “bap-

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tized into Christ” (Gal. 3:27), where they are then “new creature(s)” (2 Cor. 5:17). They are then citizens in the kingdom of heaven, members of the body, children in the family of God, stones in a spiritual house, and workers in the Lord’s vineyard. Before baptism into Christ, they are none of these. In this relationship, they are “the elect” — the chosen of God (Eph. 1:3-11; 1 Pet. 1:2). Outside that “place” they are rejected of God.



ordained the congregational unit and gave direction for the function of each local church. Individuals comprising the universal church are required to keep their garments clean, and remain in a state of faithful subjection to the will of God. Likewise, congregations must recognize divinely given marks of identity and pattern themselves accordingly. Denominational organizations and human enterprises must never supplant the church. They are not as good as the place where God has put his name. Jesus said, “Every plant, which my heavenly Father

To offer salvation on less terms, and in some other place than what God ordained is presumptuous. It arrogantly seeks to dethrone God and perch man on the throne of the Almighty. “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47). “And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross” (Eph. 2:16). “And he is the saviour of the body” (Eph. 5:23). The Lord does not promise salvation outside the church. If God adds the saved to the church, then those outside that place are lost. If the reconciled are in the one body, then those outside of it have no peace with God. If Christ is the saviour of the body, the church, then those outside that relationship are not among the saved.

hath not planted, shall be rooted up” (Matt. 15:13). Such teaching is unpopular with many. Some who profess to believe it, are uncomfortable when this truth is spoken out loud. They are afraid some of their friends or relatives will actually understand what it really means. God’s church, his chosen “place,” exists by divine wisdom, fulfills the purpose of the ages, embodies all the saved, is sufficient to do everything God gave it to do, and has heaven as its ultimate destiny. No human arrangement is just as good. Some may protest, “That is too narrow.” Truth is narrow. Was it truth, or narrow-mindedness when God told Israel to break down the altars and high places in Canaan and worship him only in the place he instructed?

The nature of the relationship is clearly given in the New Testament. Universally, the church is a relationship and has no organic structure. Locally it does. There was an identifiable body at Philippi called “the church” with its bishops, deacons, and saints. God gave order to the effect that souls occupying the divine sphere of the saved, might band together in local assemblies to worship and pool their energies and resources to carry out divine service. God

Reader, if you are not in the place of salvation, we plead with you to obey the gospel at once. If you have entered the place of the saved, then show the same faithfulness continually which prompted you to begin, lest you fall away and lose your reward.

Training Up A Child

by Gwendolyn M. Webb

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Bill Cavender

The “Orphan Home” Issue — 1947 Until Now

“If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (Jas. 1:22-27, KJV). “But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:17-18, ESV).

“Do right to the widow, judge for the fatherless, give to the poor, defend the orphan, clothe the naked” (2 Esdras II, 20). “Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless” (Exod. 22:22-24). “If I have withheld anything that the poor desired, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail, or have eaten my morsel alone, and the fatherless has not eaten of it (for from my youth the fatherless grew up with me as with a father, and from my mother’s womb I guided the widow), if I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing, or the needy without covering, if his body has not blessed me, and if he was not warmed with the fleece of my sheep, if I have my hand against the fatherless, because I saw my help in the gate, then let my shoulder blade fall from my shoulder, and let my arm be broken from its socket. For I was in terror of calamity from God, and I could not have faced his majesty” (Job 31:16-23, ESV; compare with KJV, ASV, NASV).

The above Scriptures, and so many more which could be cited (including one verse from the Apocrypha), God’s holy word and revelation to mankind regarding concern for and care of the poor, the needy, the widow, the father-

less, and the distressed, creates in the soul of the believer a desire to give, to share, to help, to be concerned, and to alleviate the pains and distresses of the unfortunate and the needy of this world, and in the family of God, as much as possible, “as we therefore have opportunity” (Gal. 6:10). There is no such person as a Christian, a true believer, a child of God, who does not believe in caring for “the fatherless and widows in their affliction.” If there was such a one, or ever had been such a one, that individual would be “worse than an infidel” (1 Tim. 5:4, 8, 16; Luke 10:29-37). The love of God could never dwell in the soul of such a one (1 John 3:17).

From my youth (I am now almost seventy-seven years of age) I was taught by my Methodist parents, by their words and examples, and by God’s word, to share, to give, to be compassionate. Being born into and “growing up” in the days of “the great depression” when there were so many poor and needy people, I saw my father and my mother, themselves poor people in this world’s goods, share and give to others. With my father out of work from his Illinois Central Railroad job for almost three years in the depression; seeing him work a tremendously large vegetable garden with a manually-pushed garden plow and with a hoe (no gasoline-powered tools and tillers in those days); seeing the fruit(s) from the apple, peach, and pear trees in the large orchard, and the grapes from the fifteen-yards long and five-yards wide concord-grape arbor; peddling and selling what vegetables and fruits we could (a large, heaped-up bucket, “a peck,” of beautiful, fresh concord grapes sold for a quarter, twenty-five cents, and twenty cents if folks didn’t have or couldn’t afford a quarter, or otherwise just give them away), and canning and drying fruits and vegetables for our own use; seeing both parents and the four older children milking five Jersey cows and, for years, selling milk and butter; raising, feeding, killing, and eating many chickens; eating eggs daily; killing four

large, fat hogs “the first cold spell after Thanksgiving,” salting, hickory-smoking and curing a year’s supply of meat, and with several “stands of lard” to cook and bake with for a year; all these, and more, were facets of and in the “growing-up” years. My mother cooked two meals a day for a family of eight, breakfast and dinner, with “left-overs” for supper, cooking on a wood cookstove, a wood range, in a hot kitchen in the summer and a cold kitchen in the winter, cooking for herself, her husband, and the six living children (four died in their early years). There were no “snack foods,” or “fast food restaurants.” There were no school lunch programs, so we took a lunch to school in a brown paper sack, consisting of country-cured ham and biscuit, or country-cured sausage and biscuit. If we were hungry when we came home from school, it was a glass of buttermilk (or sweet milk) and cornbread, or a cold biscuit and sausage or bacon left from breakfast, or cornbread with an onion from the garden, or a raw sweet potato dug from the garden, or a baked sweet potato left from dinner or from the previous day. My mother kept a spotless, dustless, well-ordered house which had no electricity, no plumbing, no running water. She washed clothes on Mondays and ironed on Tuesdays. We were poor and our neighbors were poor. There were very few automobiles, no televisions, but there was an “eight-party” crank type telephone and a “battry” powered old table-model radio, accompanied by reading and studying at night by “coal-oil” (kerosene) lamps. The children went bare-footed from May through September. There was always sufficient, nourishing, healthy food to eat, and enough old, hand-me-down, patched at the knees and elbows, clothes to wear.

Yet, in all those “hard times,” there was plenty to share, to give away. Paul teaches this about God’s grace in 2 Corinthians 9:9-10. God gives seed to the sower for planting, multiplies the seed and the fruit, and the sower has bread for food, seed to save for another crop, and food and seed to give away to others. God’s grace is that way. He has an inexhaustible supply of grace and goodness and blessings. He never runs out! There is plenty of grace, forgiveness, and blessings for everyone. Because he gives grace to you does not mean that he has less and/or none for me. We never lose anything by giving and sharing. Our Savior said that “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35), and the true believer cultivates a spirit and life of sharing and giving.

I often saw my mother prepare dishes and plates of food for hungry people, and for the “hobo” who came to our doors, poor men, “down on their luck,” with no jobs or money, who rode the rails in the empty box-cars of the two railroads (Illinois Central, and the Gulf, Mobile and Northern) which were within two to three hundred yards from our house in Eastport, across the railroad tracks on the east side of the village of Bemis, Tennessee. These men were not robbers or thieves, never caused a problem, but

were hungry and thirsty. And my folks helped many, all who came to our house to ask for help and food! I saw my parents give clothes to poor neighbors and beggars who came by our house, and sacks of dried beans, peas, and fruit, cuts of cured meat, chickens and eggs, and milk and butter to hungry people.

In our neighborhood, up and down those dusty, unpaved roads, there were families who cared for their sick and aged ones until they died, and cared for children whose parents had died. The “county poor-house” was a few miles away. In those days people really cared for the helpless and homeless, the widows and the fatherless as James 1:22-27, 1 John 3:17-18, and so many other Scriptures teach us to do. There wasn’t much, if any, “proxy religion.” People didn’t have any money to pay someone else to practice “pure religion and undefiled” for them. Back then folks could understand the Scriptures regarding individual responsibilities and could practice them. They were, for the most part, uneducated men and women but they could understand the teachings and simplicity of the New Testament. Back then folks didn’t need a high-powered preacher or a superintendent of an institution or a writer in a paper to tell us that if you don’t send a check and donation to an institution of the brethren, then you do not believe in caring for the orphans and the widows, and the poor and the needy.

When I obeyed the gospel in February 1946, and when Marinel and I married in June 1948, we continued to practice what both of us had seen and learned from our parents and neighbors in the days of youth. We made precious little money in the late forties, and into the fifties and sixties, in those lean years when our sons were being born and reared, and when we could have greatly used more income. I never “negotiated a wage package” with a church in all my fifty-six years of working with congregations (as I heard a preacher say a couple of years ago when he was desiring to move to a large congregation; he was “needing” a huge salary, annuities, an IRA, health insurance, and other “fringe benefits,” which he “negotiated” and received, a total “package” of about \$85,000 worth a year!) We gave food to the needy; my wife sewed and made clothes for children; we bought clothes for people; we sent individual checks to the “orphan’s homes”; we gave money to our own kinfolks who had needs, especially to one sister whose husband left her and their three children for another woman; and we gave canned goods, other provisions, money and clothes to the “orphan’s home truck” when it came by where we lived. Yet because I never believed, from studying the New Testament, that men could plan, build, get a state license for, and attach their human agencies to the divine churches of the Lord, I did not believe in helping the orphans and the widows, and helping the poor and needy. It was said by institutional brethren that my wife and I would let little children starve to death, and the naked go unclothed and freeze to death. According to church-supported-institution-

A Spiritual Boost

Every Christian sometimes finds himself in need of a boost of his spiritual battery, and the same is also true of preachers. While some act as if it is strange that any preacher might sometimes find himself weak and longing for more spiritual might, most children of the Lord understand that preachers are cut from the same cloth as other Christians. All of us must remember to not grow weary in doing good, knowing that we shall reap in due season if we do not lose heart (Gal. 6:9).

An author unknown to this writer wrote the following about the diverse needs, requirements, and expectations that many demand of preachers.

WHAT A PREACHER NEEDS

The strength of an ox,
The daring of a lion,
The harmlessness of a dove,
The gentleness of a sheep,
The vision of an eagle,
The perspective of a giraffe,
The endurance of a camel,
The stomach of a horse,
The faithfulness of a prophet,
The fervency of an evangelist,
The tenacity of a bulldog,
The wisdom of an owl,
The industry of a beaver,
The versatility of a chameleon,

The hide of a rhinoceros,
The disposition of an angel,
The bounce of a kangaroo,
The loyalty of an apostle,
The tenderness of a shepherd,
The devotion of a mother,
And then, he would not please everyone.

Such a spiritual need evidently existed in the life of young Timothy. He had the best spiritual training in childhood and youth that any Jew of that time could have desired, though his own father probably did not contribute to it. “When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also” (2 Tim. 1:5). “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:14-15).

Why then would Timothy need special encouragement in his work as an evangelist? Remember that he was in Ephesus to help the church with the problems associated with false teachers and with helping the congregation in learning about elders and selecting them (1 Tim. 1:3; 3:1). It is possible that Timothy was the most mature Christian in the church, with few others capable of building him up

al-promoters, we lacked “the milk of human kindness” and were not worthy of the fellowship of brethren because we did not believe that divine churches of our Lord, planned and purposed in the eternal wisdom of Almighty God (Eph. 3:8-12), and purchased with the precious blood of Jesus our Savior (Acts 20:28; Matt. 20:28; 26:28; 1 Pet. 1:18-19) could have human-originated, state-authorized, man-made, agencies attached to them and subsidized by the divine churches of Christ Jesus our Lord. (Our next article, Lord

willing, will continue “The Orphan Home Issue.”)

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as he could them. Even the more mature disciples sometimes need encouragement and strength, which they can gain from others.

This must have been Paul's motivation in writing as he did in certain instances in the first letter to Timothy. It is clear that the bolstering of the young preacher's spirit was the design of some of the older apostle's words.

1. He reminded Timothy of his gift. "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery" (1 Tim. 4:14). From this verse and from 2 Timothy 1:6 we learn that Timothy had some kind of gift. It is this writer's conclusion that it was a miraculous gift, because it came in connection with a certain revelation through (*dia*) the imposition of Paul's hands and in association with (*meta*) the laying on of the hands of elders. The wording of this admonition might imply that Timothy was growing disheartened in his work. Such a divine reminder might have been just what he needed.

2. He also challenged him to show courage by a reminder of his good confession of the Lord unto eternal life, as well as the Lord's confession. "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Tim. 6:12-14). Timothy hereby could realize that he was in the company of Christ in his confession, in which he must continue to persevere.

3. He exhorted Timothy to "guard the deposit" of

the gospel message given to him. "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called" (1 Tim. 6:20). Both letters to Timothy deal with the error being advocated and its proponents. Timothy had a difficult task on his hands, but he must preserve the gospel message pure from all contamination. Such was his trust. He was doing this work of guarding the gospel for God. This meant that he would have to oppose all efforts of the errorists. It also meant that he might occasionally have to identify some of error's advocates by name, as did Paul (1 Tim. 1:20). Playing fast and loose with names is not what Paul did (he rarely named people), but in a few instances he thought the peril sufficient to name the teachers. One who desires to follow the example of Paul in this matter will be try to avoid doing such, but he might sometime need to step forward to name someone. A good test of the appropriateness of naming a teacher of error might be to ask whether the cause of truth can go forward without naming the errorist. If the teacher thinks it essential to name the person, he also ought to ask whether he enjoys doing so, to be sure about his own motive. The preacher's responsibility in guarding the gospel and saving souls, including his own soul, is a grave one! It is possible that he can become so fixed on doing one that he neglects the other objective.

CONCLUSION

Preacher of the word, take your task seriously. Guard the message. Live the life that Christ approves. Make sure of your motives. In doing all of this you will show yourself deserving of the spiritual boost that will come. Treasure the encouragement of brethren. Trust the Lord, and depend on him

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The Serpent That Was Not There

When one suggests that Bible writers may have been “borrowing imagery from the mythological culture of that day” and taking “features of well-known pagan myths” which would later be translated from “the antique theological images of Genesis into the cosmic language that had become commonplace by the Greco-Roman period,” he is no longer speaking as the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11).

Throughout history, the truth of God has been assaulted by those interpreting figurative symbols as literal history and by those interpreting literal history as figurative symbols. Premillennialists have advocated their theories by interpreting the figurative symbols of books like Daniel and Revelation as literal history. Those denying the literal, historical facts presented in the Bible have taken the opposite tack, interpreting literal facts as figurative symbols. Both have violated a simple and fundamental rule for interpreting Scripture:

All words are to be understood in their literal sense, unless the evident meaning of the context forbids. — Figures are the exception, literal language the rule; hence we are not to regard anything as figurative until we feel compelled to do so by the evident import of the passage (D.R. Dungan, *Hermeneutics* 184).

This rule is not true because Dungan stated it in a book widely used by faithful brethren for many years, but because the rule expresses the way speakers and writers moved by the Holy Spirit interpreted the writings of others who were also inspired of God. For instance, in Jonah 1:17, the inspired writer related as literal, historical fact that Jonah was swallowed by a great fish and remained in its belly three days and three nights. When Jesus gave the God-breathed interpretation of this passage, He related the account as literally true in the details recorded. Another example

of the literal facts of biblical accounts being interpreted literally in other passages may be seen in the account from Numbers 21:6 of “serpents” biting the children of Israel in the wilderness wandering which the inspired apostle interpreted as being literal “serpents” (1 Cor. 10:9).

In neither case seen above did other writers under the control of the Spirit interpret the historical account as referring to figurative animals, rather than the literal animals affirmed in the Bible text. Why? Because the original account indicated a literal interpretation was the proper understanding of the text. It is true that the word “serpent” is elsewhere used symbolically with reference to Dan (Gen. 49:17) and Satan (Rev. 12:9; 20:2). However, nothing in Numbers 21 would suggest the writer had reference to Dan, the tribe of Dan or Satan biting the Israelites (either figuratively or literally). To inject a figurative interpretation into Numbers 21 on the basis of what “serpent” means elsewhere is to misuse Scripture.

Let us remember that the “days” of the creation account were re-interpreted by several brethren a few years ago so as to deny the literal fact that “in six days, Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is” (Exod. 20:11). Many scholars deny that the flood of Genesis 6 was universal in scope, but was only a local flood. Sadly, another recent teaching has publicly advanced the “possibil-

ity” that literal facts stated in another historical account may be seen as “symbolic” or “a literary device.” An interpretation has been offered as viable that claims an actual, literal serpent may *not* have been present in the Garden of Eden when Eve was tempted.

This interpretation of the account in Genesis chapter 3 is suggested by Marty Pickup in his lecture manuscript on “The Seed of Woman” as given in the 2003 Florida College lecture book (49-78). We would encourage the reader to obtain a copy of this lecture manuscript and to give it a fair and careful reading in its entirety. In the section entitled “Identifying the Serpent” (55-62), brother Pickup begins by contrasting the interpretations of liberal commentators, who treat the serpent of Genesis 3 as folklore and myth, with the New Testament writers who “treat the events of Genesis 3 as historical fact” and connect the serpent with Satan (56). He also makes the observation that the ancient Jews made the same connection between the serpent and Satan (57-58).

Brother Pickup addresses the use of Genesis 3 in passages such as Revelation 12:9 and 20:2 which identify the serpent of Genesis 3 as Satan. He is answering a liberal attack against the New Testament “reinterpretation” of the Genesis narrative. The liberal attack says that Genesis 3 presents the picture that a literal serpent approached Eve, but the New Testament writers “reinterpret” the Genesis 3 narrative to say that the serpent was Satan. In the liberal’s view, this reinterpretation of Genesis 3 is an unwarranted use of the Genesis account. The usual response to this liberal attack is to say that the Genesis narrative must be understood as teaching that the Devil spoke through a literal serpent (just as God spoke through the mouth of Balaam’s donkey). However, brother Pickup rejects that approach to Genesis 3 as the only “possibility.”

Instead, our brother proposes

another solution to the problem. He believes that Near Eastern mythology used the term “serpent” (Hebrew: *nahash*) to refer to an evil spirit in conflict with God. He then suggests that Moses may have used *nahash* in Genesis 3, not to refer to a literal serpent, but to Satan. He states that the “fact that Genesis called this creature a serpent and a beast of the field would not have prevented its being an evil spirit” (58). In this case, the New Testament writers, agreeing with the Jewish reading of Genesis, would have interpreted Moses’ use of *nahash* as a reference to Satan. The problem this poses for the interpretation of Genesis 3 is that *nahash* would not refer to a *literal* serpent confronting a *literal* Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Brother Pickup says we must understand the account of Genesis 3 in “the theological milieu of the Pentateuch” where evil came to the world as a result of rebellious angels who sought “to induce the same rebellion in human beings” (59). He notes, “Reinforcing this understanding is the fact that Genesis 6 explicitly discusses rebellious angels who were responsible for the corruption of the human race which led to the great flood.” He points out that most scholars, ancient and modern, believe the “daughters of men” were humans and the “sons of God” were rebellious angels who “sired children” by those women. Our brother notes that “some conservative scholars” argue against this view, but he disagrees with their alternate interpretations (see his footnote #23, 74). However, based on his approach to Genesis 6, brother Pickup concludes, “The parallel between this event and the incident of Genesis 3 is quite precise, particularly if one interprets the serpent of Genesis 3 to be a spiritual being as well” (60).

This then leads to a subsection called “Further Questions” (60-62) in which brother Pickup asks why Satan might have taken the form of a serpent of the garden. He suggests that “taking the form of a garden animal was the

devil’s way of accommodating to the level of Adam and Eve so as to appear non-threatening” (60). After all of the statements given by brother Pickup in support of the literalness and historicity of the account of Genesis 3, it is the interpretation suggested at the end of this section that truly leaves one astonished. To capture the entire thought, this section is quoted below:

But if the serpent is really Satan, why does Genesis identify him only as a serpent and not as a spiritual being? Why do we have to rely upon later revelation to clarify the real nature of the serpent? This is the chief objection that many people raise to the identification of the serpent with Satan. But again, God himself is not depicted in Genesis 3 as a spiritual being per se. Were it not for later revelation, we would not realize that the anthropomorphic form of God in Genesis 3 is not His true nature but that God is actually Spirit.

It is also worth considering that *the account* of these events may be, to some degree, accommodative and symbolic. Genesis may use the serpent motif because it is borrowing imagery from the mythological culture of that day regarding a cosmological foe of Deity. Old Testament writers commonly take features of well-known pagan myths and rework them in order to present the truth of Israelite monotheism. Psalms 29 and 74, for example, recast poetic images about Baal, the storm god, into depictions of Yahweh as the Lord of nature (Craigie 147-151). Isaiah 27 and Psalm 74 transform stories about Baal’s primeval defeat of Leviathan, the god of chaos, into accounts of Yahweh’s defeat of this creature when He brought order to creation (Emerton 327-328; Hugenberger 109). Many scholars suggest that this kind of reshaping of pagan themes into a presentation of monotheistic truth is, to some degree, what Genesis is doing in its creation account (Boyd 84-85). It is interesting that in the ancient world Leviathan was imagined as a draconic serpent with seven heads

(cf. Isa. 27:1; Ps. 74:14) and Revelation 12 makes use of this same figure to depict Satan: “And behold, a great red dragon having seven heads. . . . And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan” (Rev. 12:3, 9).

It is possible, therefore, that Genesis recounted man’s primeval fall using the language and symbology that was best suited for its original audience. Since ancient creation myths gave a serpentine form to the being who opposed the order of creation, it was fitting that the tempter in the garden be depicted in this way (Boyd 156). Such a literary device may have been quite obvious to the original audience of Genesis.

It seems likely that later Jews and Christians recognized the various factors discussed above when they identified the serpent of Genesis 3 with Satan. There was no other reasonable conclusion to draw than that which the apostle John expressed: “The serpent of old . . . is the devil and Satan” (Rev. 20:2). What we see here is a “translation” of the antique theological images of Genesis into the cosmic language that had become commonplace by the Greco-Roman period. Yet the essence of what Genesis relates is unaltered (60-62).

While brother Pickup may, or may not, personally believe this interpretation that “the account of” Genesis 3 “may be, to some degree, accommodative and symbolic,” or that the “serpent motif” is borrowed “imagery from the mythological culture of that day” allowing the use of “such a literary device,” please allow it to sink into your mind that he offers it to brethren today as “*worth considering*” and “*possible*.” When one suggests that Bible writers may have been “borrowing imagery from the mythological culture of that day” and taking “features of well-known pagan myths” which would later be translated from “the antique theological images of Genesis into the cosmic language that had become commonplace by the Greco-Roman period,” he is no longer speaking as the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11). He may be speaking the language of modern theology or of evangelicals, *but he is not speaking as the oracles of God*.

UNDERSTANDING THE TERMINOLOGY

The terminology used by brother Pickup is not found in Scripture. After all, where do you read about a “serpent motif” in the Bible? Which inspired writer tells us “that this kind of reshaping of pagan themes into a presentation of monotheistic truth is, to some degree, what Genesis is doing in its creation account”? Moses and Jesus clearly knew nothing of such (Exod. 20:8-11; 31:12-17; Mark 10:6-7). What Scripture speaks to us about “borrowing imagery from the mythological culture of that day regarding a cosmological foe of Deity”? What passage explains the use of “symbology” and “literary device” to properly re-interpret literal accounts of Scripture? Clearly, this is not the terminology of the Bible. It is the language used by the

academic and denominational world that clouds, obscures, and denies the plain teaching of the text.

The word “motif” refers to “a recurring design or feature in a literary or artistic work” (*Oxford American Dictionary* [1980] 434). Even if the recurring figure of a serpent in pagan mythology is used to symbolize an evil force opposed to the creator, the fact remains that the serpent of Genesis 3 was not a “motif,” but a literal serpent that was cursed to crawl on its belly (Gen. 3:14). Not a “symbolic” serpent, but a serpent just as literal and real as Eve (Gen. 3:1-5; 2 Cor. 11:3). Not the “imagery from the mythological culture of that day regarding a cosmological foe of Deity,” but a serpent that literally spoke by and for Satan as the New Testament affirms. Not an example of “features of well-known pagan myths and [reworked] in order to present the truth of Israelite monotheism,” but a serpent described by the inspired record as a “beast of the field” (Gen. 3:1, 14). Not a “literary device,” but a serpent in literal truth.

When brother Pickup says, “Many scholars suggest that this kind of reshaping of pagan themes into a presentation of monotheistic truth is, to some degree, what Genesis is doing in its creation account,” we also recognize that “many scholars” treat the entire account of Genesis 3 as myth. Which group of “scholars” are we to believe? We do not determine the interpretation of Genesis 3 by what “many scholars” believe, but by what the text says. The Bible presents both the creation account of Genesis 1 and 2, as well as the account of the serpent in Genesis 3 as being literally factual. Failure to defend such against any interpretation that would claim otherwise in either case is a denial of the historicity of the Scripture in those accounts. Though our brother claims to defend the “historicity” of the Bible account, the word “historicity” has a concrete meaning and is defined as follows: “the condition of having actually occurred in history; authenticity” (*Webster’s New World Dictionary*, 2nd College Edition, 665). One does not defend the historicity of Genesis 3 when he accepts or is tolerant of views that deny the presence of an actual, authentic, literal serpent in the presence of Eve at the temptation. One cannot claim to believe that the account of Genesis 3 is literal history and suggest, in the same breath, that one of the clearly defined characters in the text may actually be a “literary device” symbolizing an unnamed spiritual being. *These two interpretations are contradictory and cannot exist together*. Indeed, we must choose which is the true interpretation of the text.

In 2 Corinthians 11:3, Paul warned the Corinthians that they were in danger of being “corrupted from the simplicity and purity that is towards Christ” just as “the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness.” Now, it seems some are beguiled by pagan mythology and the craftiness of academic, theological re-interpretations to be corrupted away from the simplicity and purity of the text that clearly says

a serpent was there in the first place. The same thing happened with re-interpretations of the creation account that denied the literal creation of the physical universe and its inhabitants in six days. When we stay with the simplicity and purity of the text, we have no problem. When one begins to hypothesize about “the serpent motif because it is borrowing imagery from the mythological culture of that day regarding a cosmological foe of Deity” or similar theorizing about the creation account, that is where we start to have a very serious problem.

Years ago, brethren were rightly impressed by the simplicity and purity in the preaching of brethren like H.E. Phillips, James P. Miller, Harry Pickup, Sr., and others. Their appeal was to the Scripture and the simplicity of understanding that text as opposed to the confusion of denominational theologies. If they took note of the various theories of men, they followed it with a bold refutation of any error that contradicted the plain truth of the Bible text. Let us not forsake the plain and simple gospel preaching that saves souls and continues to frustrate and confound the “wise” of this world (1 Cor. 1:18-25). We will never impress the academics with simple gospel preaching, but it will continue to save the lost today as it did when Paul preached it (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:18ff; 2:1ff).

FROM A TALKING SERPENT TO A “SERPENT MOTIF”

In his manuscript, brother Pickup refers to the fact that serpents do not normally speak and that this may cause us to think it was something other than a literal serpent (58). If that would suggest we should re-interpret the serpent of Genesis 3 in light of a “serpent motif,” what would it do to the talking donkey of Numbers 22? The Bible says that the donkey spoke (Num. 22:30; 2 Pet. 2:16). That faculty of speech was not, however, explained by something intrinsic to the nature of a donkey, but by the fact that God “opened the mouth of the donkey” (Num. 22:28). We dare not go to a parallel in pagan mythology to find a “donkey motif” and re-interpret the story to deny the presence of a literal donkey that talked.

When Jesus referred to Jonah as being “three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish” (Matt. 12:40), are we to take the “great fish” as a literal character of the story? How can we know for sure, since big fish do not normally store whole and healthy men in their bellies for three days and nights? Shall we consider the *possibility* that this was the accommodative symbolism of a “Big Fish Motif”? If not, why not?

If we start down this road of re-interpretation, how long will it be before we go from a “Serpent Motif” to a “Donkey Motif” and a “Big Fish Motif”? Once we learn to tolerate those, how much longer will it be until we discover a “Flood Motif,” a “Virgin Birth Motif” and a “Resurrection Motif”? After all, none of these Bible accounts conforms

to the norm of observed reality because they do not happen in ordinary life.

One could just as logically appeal to a “resurrection motif” in an effort to deny the literal resurrection as one could deny the literal serpent by appealing to a “serpent motif” in Genesis 3. After all, “resurrection” and “raised” are sometimes used in a symbolic sense as well. However, in a context affirming the literal resurrection of Christ, it would be a misuse of Scripture to interpret the word in a non-literal sense. The same is true with the word “serpent” in Genesis 3. One may claim that “the essence of what Genesis relates is unaltered,” but the understanding of the literal nature of the characters involved has been *greatly altered*. The *entirety* of God’s word is unalterable truth (Ps. 119:128, 160), not just the “essence.”

The model of interpretation suggested by brother Pickup as “worth considering” is both false and dangerous. Carried to its logical end, it could be used to re-interpret every miracle from the creation to the resurrection in light of pagan myths and cultural folklore. The Bible teaches the literal presence of the serpent in Genesis 3 just as certainly as it teaches the literal nature of the days in which God accomplished the creation in Genesis 1 and 2. The fact that both occurrences differ from the norm confirms the presence of the miraculous, not the need for re-interpreting the passage so as to, in the final analysis, deny the literal facts stated in the text.

THE BIBLE SAYS A LITERAL SERPENT WAS THERE WITH EVE

While there is nothing in the text of Genesis 3 that *demand*s or *compels* a symbolic interpretation of the serpent, the Bible text does give a compelling argument *against* a non-literal interpretation of the serpent. A careful examination of the wording found in the text itself is the clearest way for the Bible believer to see that a literal serpent really was there. In fact, the context of Genesis 3 and related passages will not even permit a figurative interpretation. When one suggests the *possibility* of a figurative interpretation, he must appeal to a parallel in pagan mythology, because the Bible *never hints at a figurative interpretation*.

The main question is this: What evidence from the biblical text helps us to determine whether the serpent of Genesis 3 was a literal serpent or a figurative serpent used as a literary device?

1. In examining the text of Genesis 3, the text clearly speaks of a real, literal serpent. “Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made” (v. 1). Eve was under the impression that she was deceived by a real serpent (v. 13). When God cursed the serpent, he made reference to its relation to the beasts of the field as well as it going about on its belly (v. 14).

Now what part of this account would suggest to us that the “serpent” really was not a literal serpent?

2. If we miss that affirmation in Genesis 3, Paul surely gives an inspired commentary in 2 Corinthians 11:3. The inspired apostle simply says, “The serpent beguiled Eve.” If Eve was literal, the serpent was also literal. It is just that simple if we accept the Bible as truth. Paul apparently did not feel compelled to translate any “antique theological images of Genesis into the cosmic language that had become commonplace” by that time. If these pagan symbols and motifs were well known in Paul’s time, as brother Pickup claims, Paul did not pay them any attention — and neither should we. Let us not leave “the simplicity and the purity” of God’s revealed word for interpretations derived from pagan myths or other extra-biblical sources.

3. The Scripture as a whole plainly says that a literal serpent was present in Genesis 3 and that Satan was present. *Direct statements* make it clear that a literal serpent was present (Gen. 3:1-14; 2 Cor. 11:3). In fact, every direct statement in Scripture regarding who tempted Eve in the garden specifies it was *the serpent*. Several *implications* within God’s word cause us to *necessarily infer* that Satan was also present to direct his evil temptation through the serpent (Gen. 3:15; Rev. 12:9; John 8:44; etc.). If we believe that God legitimately teaches by direct statement, approved example and implication, *we must accept all that he says by all of those means as the whole truth*. Thus, we must conclude that both are literally factual unless something in the Scripture *forces* us to interpret one or the other in a symbolic or figurative sense. Nothing in the context of Genesis 3 or any related passage *forces* a figurative interpretation.

4. We may test the theory that there may not have been a literal serpent in the garden by using an interpretive tool long employed by faithful brethren. Dungan expressed the rule this way:

The proper definition of a word may be used in the place of the word. If the trial be made in this way, and the definition is wrong, the sense of the passage will be so destroyed as to make it apparent. It need only to be stated that the true meaning of a word will give the same sense that the word would give; hence, to remove the word and replace it with the definition, is easily done, and is a valuable method” (Dungan 188-189).

If our brother’s theory is correct or even possible, we can replace the word “serpent” with “Satan” in Genesis 3 and it should not change the meaning of the text. Let us try that in Genesis 3:14 where it would make the text read as follows:

And Jehovah God said unto Satan, Because thou hast done this, cursed art thou above all cattle, and above every beast

of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.

Clearly, that would not make sense. A *literal serpent* is the clear point of reference to a serpent that goes on its belly. It is also clear that a serpent is classified as a creature among the beasts of the field. This is verified by Genesis 3:1. These verses do not make sense if the word “Satan” is substituted for “serpent.” Though Satan is the obvious moving force behind the tempting of Eve, a literal serpent must be present to induce a divine curse upon this particular beast of the field.

SEPARATING “INTENT” FROM “EFFECT”

Let it be clearly understood that we accept brother Marty Pickup’s explanation that he intended his teaching to be a rebuttal to theological liberals who deny the credibility of Genesis 3 in every way. However, one may give what is in his mind an *intended rebuttal* to theological liberalism that has an *unintended effect* of conflicting with the harmony of God’s revealed truth.

For example, when one denies the literal interpretation of the creation account, clearly affirmed in the Scripture, he has contradicted the word of God. If he does so for the purpose of answering theological liberals by arguing it was intended to be understood in an accommodative or symbolic sense, he has still contradicted the word of God. The intention may be different, but the result is the same. When one tolerates the denial of the literal interpretation of the creation account, saying that it is possibly understood as a literary device with a symbolical interpretation and that such an interpretation should not present a problem, he has justified a tolerance for a teaching that contradicts the word of God. If he does such for the purpose of answering theological liberals, he has still been tolerant of a teaching that contradicts the word of God in such a way as to unintentionally advance liberalism.

Likewise, if God’s word teaches that the serpent of Genesis 3 is also literal, one denying that fact would contradict the Scripture to deny it was literal, regardless of his admittedly noble intentions. If the Bible teaches that the serpent of Genesis 3 was literal, one justifying tolerance for a teaching which denies that fact would still be justifying tolerance for a teaching contrary to the word of God, regardless of noble intentions.

JUST AN “ULTRA-CONSERVATIVE FUSS”?

If the two authors of this article were the only people raising an objection to a non-literal interpretation of the serpent in Genesis 3, one might suggest this is just a personal matter. If only a few preachers seen as “ultra-conservatives” among churches of Christ voiced opposition to the teaching that no literal serpent was there in the garden, one might say it was just evidence of their radicalism. However, if those

known for fighting the modernism present in institutional and denominational circles noted alarm over such teaching, would that get the attention of the more skeptical? Let us see two examples.

Among those who have expressed their concerns is Dr. Bert Thompson, one of the institutional brethren who exposed the errors moving towards modernism at Abilene Christian University. After reading Marty Pickup's lecture quoted above, Dr. Thompson sent the following post to Harry Osborne:

Dear Harry,

What a shock it was to read Marty Pickup's comments about Satan. In 1986, when I wrote the book, *Is Genesis Myth?*, about the teaching of evolution at ACU, I knew things were "bad" at my alma mater. But if someone had told me that, a decade or less later, the school would be where it is now, even I would have demurred.

Now, to see what is happening at "conservative" Florida College — well, all I can say is that it brings back terribly unpleasant memories. One does not have to be prescient to see where all of this is going, eh? I appreciate your sharing this with me. Modernism has indeed hurt us deeply — and continues to do so. I would ask, "Where will it all end?," but you and I both know that it will NOT end. And therein lies the problem. Oh, for godly elders and administrators who could put a stop to all of this!

In Him,
Bert

Being among institutional brethren, Dr. Thompson has no "axe to grind" in this discussion. The bias one would expect from him would be to view all of us as too conservative. He does, however, see the similarity between brother Marty Pickup's teaching and the teaching done at ACU, which he fought. Surely all of us would agree that the teaching Dr. Thompson fought at ACU has clearly manifested itself as modernistic in effect. Please ask yourself why Bert Thompson would view brother Pickup's teaching as headed in the same direction as the teaching fought at ACU. He sees the same thing we see. The willingness to accept or tolerate non-literal interpretations of Bible accounts based on extra-biblical sources (whether pagan mythology, modern scientific theory or whatever else), even though proper hermeneutics applied to the Scripture would demand a literal interpretation, subordinates Scripture to a place of inferiority and elevates the extra-biblical sources to a place of priority. Though we will concede such is not our brother's intent, that is the clear effect of his approach. Though we will not accuse him of accepting the consequence, others can and will take the principle he has affirmed and apply it to its logical end of denying the literal truth of one Bible account after another. *No Bible miracle can be safe from re-interpretation when others take the approach affirmed*

by our brother to its logical end.

Edward J. Young was a well-known opponent of modernism in Evangelical circles as a professor at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia. Young's statement on the interpretation of this text is worthy of consideration:

If there were no snake but merely an appearance, we might very well question the historicity of the narrative, for if the Bible spoke of a snake but did not mean a snake, we might justifiably wonder whether it did not do the same thing with other objects mentioned in this chapter. If the word "snake" is simply a symbol for something else, how do we know that other things which we meet in this chapter are not also mere symbols? It is not amiss then to lay our stress upon this first word, and to insist that the chapter begins by directing our attention to a real snake (*Genesis 3: A Devotional and Expository Study* 7-8).

No, it is not just a few ultra-conservative radicals who recognize the danger of the teaching that denies a literal serpent was in the garden. It is not the result of a few people misunderstanding the words used by brother Pickup. Others who have fought modernism rightly recognize that teaching as dangerous and have raised objection. Brethren, when one "among us" sets off the warning bells of those in institutional and denominational circles, it is past time that we awoke to recognize a serious problem!

INHERENT CONSEQUENCES OF THE TEACHING

Brother Marty Pickup's essay clearly parallels making the *literal serpent of Genesis 3* into a literary device with making the *literal account of creation* into a literary device (cf. 61). The same hermeneutic of re-interpretation of the Bible text on the basis of extra-biblical material has been used in both cases. Brother Pickup's teaching is another step in the direction of rejecting clear, literal statements of Scripture in favor of a symbolic or figurative interpretation contrary to the plain indications of the Bible text. The real tragedy is that brother Pickup really seems to think that there is no danger in his view of Genesis 3, nor of parallel views on Genesis 1 and 2. Instead of learning from the creation controversy and abandoning the failed concepts of those advocating a non-literal interpretation of the creation account, our brother has come to their defense and re-introduced the same basic approach to re-interpreting Scripture.

Though both of the authors of this review attempted through personal discussion to get him to see the dangers of his teaching, brother Pickup has rejected our efforts and maintained his view. Our hope is that he will come to see the consequences inherent in his teaching that casts doubt upon the literal facts affirmed in God's word. Though he does not acknowledge it, brother Pickup's influence over young people with the views he is justifying causes deep concern to numerous brethren. The approach he has taken

on Genesis 3 and the parallel approach taken on the creation account of Genesis 1 and 2 will undermine the faith of the young people taught those errors. We have already seen young people affected by such concepts learned from Shane Scott and Hill Roberts. Brethren in various parts of the country have seen the same thing and are rightly alarmed about the dangers.

A GROWING LACK OF CLARITY?

When Ed Harrell first claimed the Scripture lacked clarity regarding divorce and remarriage, thus allowing continued fellowship with brother Hailey in his error, faithful brethren voiced alarm at the principle and were openly fearful of where it would lead (Ed Harrell, "Divorce & Fellowship," Florida College Forum manuscript [1991], 10-11; see also Ed Harrell, *Christianity Magazine*, Aug. 1989, 6). When the same appeal was made regarding the Bible passages on "Fellowship" and the identification of a false teacher, the trend became more apparent.

When Ferrell Jenkins told us that we could not be sure the "days" of Genesis 1 were literal, the application of the principle widened even more. While chastising brethren who affirmed the necessity of defending the literal "days" taught in Scripture, brother Jenkins urged us, "Not to be wishy-washy, not to compromise on any biblical truth, but to say there are just some things so difficult that I may not be able to draw the same conclusion you've drawn on those and then to give that opportunity for people" (Ferrell Jenkins, *Making Sense of the Days of Creation*, Florida College Annual Lecture, [8 Feb. 2000]). When others told us the lack of clarity in the Bible account made it possible that a God-guided "Big Bang" billions of years ago may have begun our universe, but that it was no big deal to see it either way, there was a premium put upon uncertainty.

Brother Pickup heightened our concern about this uncertainty when he declared at the same Florida College

lectures that he could not be "dogmatic" or "a hundred percent certain" about the authenticity of 2 Peter and Jude. Though his personal conclusion was that "the weight of the evidence tips the scale in favor of the authenticity of 2 Peter and Jude," he admitted, "I can't just be dogmatic about that, I'm not a hundred percent certain about that" (*The Canonicity of the General Epistles*, Florida College Annual Lectures, [8 Feb. 2000]). Once again, the stated facts of Scripture are reduced to question marks. Can we not trust the work of the Holy Spirit who guided the writing and collection of the present New Testament canon? Why can our faith not be absolutely certain that 2 Peter and Jude are authentic and a part of "all Scripture" that is "given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17)? Does this uncertainty derive from the Scripture or from the wisdom of men?

Now, brother Pickup tells us we cannot be sure there was a literal serpent in the garden with Eve, even though the Scripture plainly affirms that fact. Where is the uncertainty in the passages relating the nature of the serpent in Genesis 3? One may claim the passages are uncertain, just as a Baptist preacher claims Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38 are unclear. However, neither claim can be sustained by turning to the text and specifically citing the points in the text that are unclear. We do not need a greater tolerance for various interpretations of the nature of the serpent in Genesis 3 based on the supposed uncertainty of the text, but brethren who will affirm the fact affirmed in Scripture — that a literal serpent was there! We do not need the various "possibilities" presented to an audience encouraged to pick among the variety as if they were equally acceptable. Would that work with alternate "possibilities" of interpreting the place of baptism in Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38? No, we need brethren who will *boldly affirm the one true interpretation and expose the error of the false interpretations.*

The path of this plea to be "uncertain" about the literal nature of Bible facts is obvious, contagious and disastrous. What is next? We do not know, but this error is sure to find other applications as it re-interprets more and more literal truths into possible literary devices about which we cannot be certain. Dear brother or sister, whether you see it or not, this principle consistently applied will sooner or later call into question the literal fact of the resurrection and the literal necessity of baptism using the same hermeneutic. Brethren, let us return to the solid ground of affirming and defending the literal facts and truths taught in God's word, and let us raise uncompromising opposition to every teaching in conflict with that truth.

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Jim McDonald

“Whosoever Is Angry With His Brother”

In Matthew 5:21-26 Jesus warns against anger and its potential power to lead to murder. He quotes the Ten Commandments: “Ye have heard that it hath been said to them of old time ‘Thou shall not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment’” (Matt. 5:21). He then adds, “But I say unto you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire” (Matt. 5:22).

Jesus mentions three places men should fear: the “judgment,” the “council,” and the “lake of fire.” Two of these were tribunals of men: the “judgment” (a group of men which sat in every city having authority over such cases as murder) and the “council,” this was the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish court composed of 72 men. The third place men are to fear is the “lake of fire,” God’s final punishment for evildoers. In Jesus’ day, power to execute criminals had been taken from Jewish hands. When Pilate told Jesus’ accusers “take him yourselves and judge him according to your law,” they responded, “It is not lawful for us to put any man to death” (John 19:31f). Since fear of the “judgment” and the “council” would be fear of the death penalty and since such power had been removed from Jewish hands, it is understood that Jesus has reference to all courts of law which can punish the murderer with death. Still, while we must control our anger which, left unchecked might lead to murder and thus our own execution; anger which stops short of murder but causes us to speak derogatorily of our

brother by saying “Raca” or “Thou fool” will lead us to an eminently higher court whose sentence is more severe than death. Jesus said, “. . . be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28).

Jesus says: “Whosoever is angry with his brother.” The KJV adds “without cause.” Not all anger is being considered in this passage. Jesus was angry because of the hardness of the hearts of those who sought occasion to condemn him because he healed a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath (Mark 3:5). Paul instructed, “Be ye angry and sin not. Let not the sun go down upon your wrath” (Eph. 4:26). Anger which may cause men to say “Raca” or “thou fool” may also incite one to kill. To prevent murder, remove the cause that leads to that murder, anger. And more importantly; remove anger for although it may not lead us to kill, it will lead us to stand in the court of God.

Rather than being angry with our brother, we should seek reconciliation with him. Thus Jesus said: “If therefore thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift” (Matt. 5:23-24).

Our attitudes and dealings with others may interfere with our worship of God. Jesus taught that in our prayers we must ask, “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors” (Matt. 6:12, 14, 15). We must do our part in restoring peace with those from whom we have been estranged. Sometimes reconciliation is impossible, but if it is, let it be because our adversary refuses to be at peace with us, not vice versa.

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“Count your blessings, not your woes.”

A Banquet You Don't Want To Miss

As I was looking up a passage of Scripture recently, I stumbled across a “gem” that I had never noticed before. Let me share it with you: “Indeed, while following the way of Your judgements, O Lord, we have waited for You eagerly; Your name, even Your memory, is the desire of our souls” (Isa. 26:8). I have returned to meditate on those words several times in the last few weeks. The more I read the verse, the more special it becomes.

These beautiful words actually find their context in a terrible scene of God’s judgement. In chapters 24-27, God’s prophet Isaiah is painting a scene of divine punishment on all heathen nations. The reason is plain: “The earth is also polluted by its inhabitants, for they transgressed laws, violated statutes, broke the everlasting covenant” (Isa. 24:5). The awful judgement that is to come is the consequence of violating the standards of the Creator. Once his wrath has been outpoured, “the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed, for the Lord of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem” (Isa. 24:23). There will be no question that “the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind” (Dan. 4:25).

But, as is characteristic of Isaiah’s prophecy, a glimmer of hope is held before mankind through the coming of the Messiah, the great Deliverer, God’s own Son. “The Lord of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain” (Isa. 25:6). The prophet tells of a time when *all* can freely come and dine with the King of kings. But this is no ordinary banquet. Perhaps you have been to formal banquets before. Possibly you have been the guest of an extremely gracious host in the past. You may have even had a great feast given in your honor. But imagine what being a guest at *this* banquet will be like. “He will swallow up death for all time, and the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces, and He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; for the Lord has spoken” (Isa. 25:8). Simply indescribable! Don’t just read over that without taking the time to process what is being portrayed. Notice that this is not a banquet for the sinlessly perfect. This is a banquet for those whose reproaches have been removed — those who have been forgiven of their sins by the Host of the banquet

himself. It is by “reproach-removed-invitation-only.” The point is, there is not simply an alternative to God’s divine punishment, there is an opportunity to grasp!

But if I am going to attend this greatest of banquets, I must do the grasping. Having revealed the promise, Isaiah continues with the invitation, “trust in the Lord forever, for in God the Lord, we have an everlasting Rock” (Isa. 26:4). I must be the one to do the trusting!

“The way of the righteous is smooth; O Upright One, make the path of the righteous level” (Isa. 26:7). Isaiah’s plea is similar to David’s prayer in Psalm 25:4-5, “Make me know Your ways, O Lord; teach my Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation.” There is salvation to be had. There is a banquet like none other to attend. There is a prize to be won. But I must be the one that travels the path!

And finally, it is then that we return to our “gem.” “Indeed, while following the way of Your judgements, O Lord, we have waited for You eagerly; Your name, even Your memory, is the desire of our souls” (Isa. 26:8). The contrast is hard to miss. Those that “transgressed laws, violated statutes, and broke the everlasting covenant” are headed for more trouble than can be imagined. But success is found in respecting the Lord’s judgments. Joy is found in staying within the bounds. The meaning of life is fulfilled in following the wishes of the Creator.

Make no mistake about it. Fulfilling the reason for your existence is not easy. The fleshly covering that we are all clothed with has its own desires. You know what it is to have desires of the stomach. You have felt desires of the muscles. You have experienced desires of the eyes. *But have you ever felt a desire of the soul?* Your flesh longs for the “here and now.” Your soul, your eternal side created in his image, yearns for the “there and then.” Are you eagerly waiting for him? Eager or not, he is coming. Is his memory your greatest desire? Acknowledge him or not, that is your choice now. But he is coming. Take a lesson from an old prophet. Make it your goal this week to say with him, “my

God Is So Good

When spring rolls around, a lot of folks become irrational. They take tiny specks of dry material, bury them in dirt, then wait for something to grow! Is that silly, or what? Are they nuts? Do they believe in miracles? Anybody can see those hard little particles are dead. They've been lying in storage for quite awhile and nothing happened. They show no signs of life whatever. So what sense does it make to think they'll come to life and grow just because they're placed in some dirt? Yet, every spring, people go out to plant seeds in their fields, gardens, and flower beds.

We came through a cold, gray winter. Now our eyes literally "bug out" at the vast display of color as we behold the resurrection of plants and flowers that lay dormant through the winter. The dogwoods, redbuds, flowering crabs, azaleas, forsythias, wisterias, tulips, and jonquils demand attention — even of the atheist. If you want to get "high," this is the way to do it. Open your eyes to God's creation.



When billions of seeds come to life each spring we don't shake our heads in disbelief as though billions of unexpected miracles have just occurred. We take it for granted that it is part of God's law. Not miraculous, but no less marvelous. Resurrection

spirit within me seeks You diligently" (Isa. 26:9). Do that, and you can expect to dine with Isaiah one day.

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has been woven into the very fabric of the creation around us. It happens every time we plant a seed.

It makes as much sense to bury a human body and expect it to come alive in a transformed condition as it does to plant a seed and expect it to come alive, transformed. Paul made this very argument (1 Cor. 15:35-58). All around us we have reminders of the resurrection. God is so good!

God is not a stern, unfeeling God. Nor is he like the pagan gods who often "get up on the wrong side of the bed" and arbitrarily hurl down thunderbolts of lightning. Though earth is not our permanent home, he has given things that he designed for our enjoyment here. Has it ever occurred to you that God didn't have to give us color? He could have made everything in varied shades of gray. Imagine if those beautiful flowers were suddenly reduced to gray. And what would that do to the beautiful rainbow, exotic fish and exotic birds? Remember, he didn't have to give us color. I'm glad he did.

What if, suddenly, curved and rounded objects were immediately replaced with sharp corners on them? Everything became square. It could get boring in a hurry. What would that do to a beautiful rose? Or your favorite pet? God's purposes didn't require him to give us varied shapes. He didn't need them for himself. I'm glad everything is not square.

God didn't have to give us the musical scale. He could have made all sounds on the same pitch and there would have been only one note for everything. We would be living in a monotone world. If he had done that we would never have known some of the



most beautiful musical compositions. Musical creativity would not have been possible. There's not much one can do, musically, with only one note!

Plus, there are other sounds — like a waterfall, children laughing, or a baby's giggle. God's purposes required none of these. I am so thankful he was mindful of us. God is so good!

The God who made it possible to speak in the first place, at one time confused the language of man. God is so wise and capable that he could have given us a language in which no two words rhymed. Poetry can challenge our brains, make us happy or sad, tickle our funny bone and be enjoyed by all ages. I'm glad he didn't leave this element out of human language. God is so good!

God could have made everything taste bland, but he is a God of taste buds. He gave us sweet, sour, salty, and bitter — all to be enjoyed. Without the ability to distinguish tastes we would never know the joys of Mama's apple pie or Grandma's chicken n' dumplings'. Chocolate sundaes would be unknown. Chocolate factories would never have come into existence. How did giving us the sense of taste benefit God? It didn't. He did it for us. God is so good!

We have been given the ability to experience pleasure. It may come through being entertained, by playing or watching sports, or enjoying a hobby, etc. Even in the marriage relationship God has provided for sexual pleasure (1 Cor. 7). These come with responsibilities attached, but he didn't have to give us pleasure. God is not an old fuddy duddy,

but is keenly in tune with his creation. His blessings on the just and unjust are not limited to rain and sunshine (Matt. 5:45). They are innumerable. God is so good!

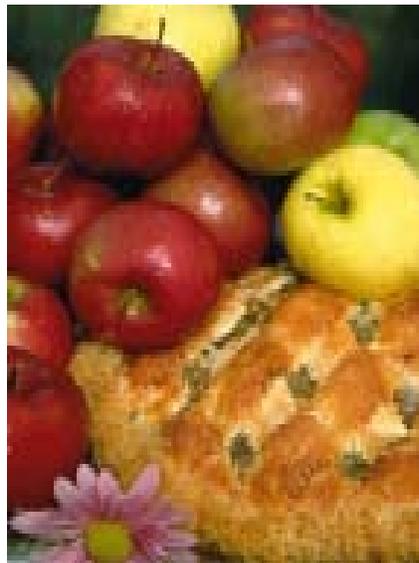
Inspiration offers the goodness of God as an incentive — a motivator for us to want to serve him. "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance" (Rom. 2:4). Why would he waste these things on a people for whom he cared nothing (2 Pet. 3:9)? If there is an ounce of gratitude in us it will humble us and make us want to serve him. If we really ponder this, we will be overwhelmed with humility.

Have you availed yourself of God's greatest act of goodness — the death of his Son? If you haven't obeyed the good news, I hope the goodness of God will lead you to repent and be baptized into Christ for the remission of your sins (Heb. 5:9; Acts 2:38). In the face of the goodness of God how could we quibble over anything he asks of us?

We have learned that there are times when diplomacy among nations does not work and more severe means have to be used. Likewise, man is not always receptive to God's diplomacy. If you do not respond to God's goodness, you will meet him in his severity (Rom. 11:22). Don't let his goodness be wasted on you. He has even better plans for you. They're just ahead. He wants you to go to heaven. God is so good!

Thank you God, for being so good.
Thank you for being our God.

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Enjoy Life, But Think Eternal

Edited by Roger Nash

Foreward by Bill Hall. A collection of inspirational articles on Christian living featuring cartoons by Justin Nash, a talented young Christian whose life was tragically cut short by an auto wreck. #16671

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Losing Confidence in the Gospel

Scripture plainly says the gospel “is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16, ESV). God has designed the message of truth in such a way, that those who are intellectually dishonest will not obey it. People who are honest and sincere will respond to the truth (John 7:17; Acts 17:10-13).

Some individuals and congregations have apparently lost confidence in the gospel as God’s message of deliverance from sin. It appears that some folks do not believe the gospel obtains results quickly enough, so they incorporate human schemes to “assist” God in his work of saving human beings. They have forgotten that it is God, not mortals who gives the growth (1 Cor. 3:6). Others see the gospel as too dogmatic and controversial. To them, it needs to be adorned with lily lips and rose scented words so that it will be palatable to the masses. Too bad that Jesus, Paul, Peter, John, and Apollos were not aware of the gospel’s inadequacies (cf. Matt. 23; Acts 17:1-9; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 Pet. 2; 2 John 9-11; Acts 18:27-28). Those who believe the gospel needs to be “prettied up” fail to realize that when such is done, the message they propagate is no longer the gospel of God. It is a distorted word that cannot save (2 Pet. 3:16).

Many congregations are no longer “hosting” *gospel* meetings, where the simple unadulterated truth is taught by knowledgeable, loving, kind, and fearless men who love souls. Sermons on the necessity of immersion, the one body, the sin of denominationalism, true worship, the person and work of the Holy Spirit, the authority of God’s word, the inspiration of the Bible, the uselessness of human creeds, etc. are considered too “immature” and trite. It is not uncommon to see sermon titles for “gospel” meetings that address subjects such as personal finances, how to have a warm heart in a cold world, the psychological effects of warfare, and a number of other topics that any preacher in any denomination could preach. This is not to say that Scripture does not contain principles that are intended to guide a person’s use of money, love, and the development of the mind, but it’s possible to preach on such subjects twenty-four hours a day, seven days a

week and never save one soul, and never expose one error. The Lord’s apostles and prophets taught the *positive and negative* aspects of the gospel (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

Many congregations no longer believe in the gospel’s power to draw men to the salvation that is in Christ (1 Cor. 1:18, 21), so they have resorted to the “food, fun, and frolic” as a means of getting peoples’ attention and persuading them to come to “salvation.” Those congregations are impugning God’s wisdom and they are displaying a lack of confidence in the gospel. They are more concerned about drawing people for the sake of having large crowds, than they are in pleasing God (John 6:26-29, 45; 12:42, 43).

Some are paying the price for neglecting the fundamentals of the faith. The result is a generation that is unfamiliar with basic truths, and as a result they are sympathetic with denominationalism, and they consider an assault on human error to be unkind, unloving, and sectarian! How sad. There are puppies who are constantly yelping because they do not like controversy, controversialists, or anything that bears semblance to opposition. They want the freedom to propagate error, but they are not so charitable that they allow those who believe they are wrong to say it, and to do all they can to stop it. The puppies among us are helping the toothless hounds, who cannot and will not defend themselves! I never cease to be amazed at the number of “yelping pups” who detest preachers, elders, editors, and writers who condemn error in no uncertain terms. The detractors are more sympathetic with Methodists, Baptists, and theologically liberal-minded “brothers” than they are with the Lord’s hard fighting soldiers on the battlefield! It seems that they are suffering from “mis-meal colic,” the result of not believing, studying, knowing, and being grounded in the truth of the gospel (Col. 2:6-7), or they have developed a rancid hatred for any sound congregation that is designated a “church of Christ.” One thing is certain, the gospel of Christ is *still* the power of God for salvation (1 Pet. 1:22-25), and our confidence in it should be unyielding (1 Cor. 15:58).

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Fellowship

Fellowship with Jesus is established when one renders obedience to the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation. One continues in fellowship as long as he follows the truth of God. Jesus said the truth will make one free (John 8:32). What a wonderful salvation is established by the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ. One is freed from the guilt of all sins as obedience is rendered to the loving Savior.

The jailor at Philippi asked, “What must I do to be saved” (Acts 16:30). God has a means of salvation available through the blood of Jesus. The jailor was told to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Without faith it is impossible to please him (Heb. 11:6). But that is not all of the commandments of God. One might believe on Jesus, but not be willing to repent of (leave) the practice of sin. Believers were told to repent (Acts 2:38). Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). Baptism is a burial in water (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12) for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Sins are not remitted without a complete subjection to Jesus Christ!

Many differ with these instructions, maintaining that one cannot merit salvation, and certainly one cannot merit salvation; but can one be saved who refuses to do what Jesus told him to do? There is no logical reason to be baptized, except that Jesus said that one must do so. Many Jews during Jesus earthly ministry would not submit to the baptism ordained by God (Mark 7:9), and Jesus said that they were rejecting the commandment of God. Often one might declare, “I want to do it my way!” But, we do not have means to save ourselves. Jesus is the only way! One cannot believe enough to be saved only by faith (Jas. 2:24). One cannot forgive himself of sins by repentance! The blood of Jesus is necessary to salvation!

Philip taught the Ethiopian eunuch the will of God, and the eunuch asked, “What doth hinder me to be baptized?” (Acts 8:36). Philip witnessed his confession of faith (v. 37). And then, “he (Philip) commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him” (Acts 8:38).

The eunuch went on his way rejoicing for he is now in the fellowship with God!

Fellowship or companionship is an approved walk that one has with God and with God’s servants. Christians share common interests, a common purpose; we are a brotherhood comprised of every saved individual on the earth!

What a joy and thrill to share the common faith with fellow Christians! What a happy experience to be in a public assembling of saints, joining our hearts in song and prayer, while listening to the word of God proclaimed.

Ungodly activity will break that fellowship! Paul identified a local brother who was living a sinful life through sexual impurity. The church was told to “purge out . . . the old lump” (1 Cor. 5:4-7). In verse 9, Paul said Christians should have no “company (fellowship, DW) with fornicators.” Sin breaks fellowship. The church followed divine instruction, and the man repented (2 Cor. 2:6-8). Christians then need to forgive, comfort, and confirm our love for they are now back in fellowship! Fellowship cannot scripturally be established or maintained separate from following the teachings in the word of God. The babe in Christ must be given room to grow, and we should all be reaching out to aid and assist him.

Problems arise in the church, generally they are not by new Christians, but older individuals who fail to maintain fellowship with God, or follow the instructions of Christ. Again, we want to do it our way! But, our way is not the divine way! Fellowship can only be maintained by one following the divine revelation!

Maintaining association and relationship outside of godly living is not according to divine truth! There is a time for longsuffering, patience, kindness and love. But ultimately, in order for one to be pleasing to God, it is necessary to return to the old paths, the teachings of the inspired Word of God. Fellowship outside of revelation is forsaking the way of truth! Let us be cautious of being too longsuffering, beyond the teachings of the Word of truth.

“Believe Jesus Rose” continued from front page

diers were professional executioners and they did their job very well. Before the actual crucifixion was a scourging. This was done with a whip consisting of leather cords with metal beads and bones woven in. The victim was beaten unmercifully until his back became a tangled mass of flesh. Historians tell us that on occasions the spine or bowels would become exposed as a result of the scourging. The victim then had to carry his own crossbeam on his shoulders to the place of crucifixion. Jesus was unable to do this, which suggests he was already in shock. Next the victim's arms were stretched out and five to seven inch spikes were nailed through the wrists into the crossbeam. These nails crushed the median nerve, which would feel like a pair of pliers squeezing and crushing the “funny bone.” The crossbeam was then lifted and attached to a beam already in the ground. Another spike was driven through the victim's heels. The weight of the body on the outstretched arms would have dislocated both shoulders (Ps. 22:14). In this outstretched position, the victim could inhale, but not exhale. Carbon dioxide built up in bloodstream, and eventually the victim would die of asphyxiation.

Even if Jesus was able to survive this experience and somehow fool the soldiers into believing he was dead, his doom was sealed when a Roman soldier thrust a spear into his side, producing water and blood (John 19:34).

There is no way Jesus survived this execution to escape from the tomb under his own power. Jesus went into Joseph's tomb a dead man.

HIS BURIAL

Some skeptics deny that Jesus was buried. Historians tell us that the bodies of most crucified people were simply discarded in a pit and consumed by wild animals. But archaeologists have discovered the remains of a crucified man buried in a tomb.

The Bible tells us that Jesus was buried, but his body wasn't just thrown into a tomb and covered with a sheet. Jesus was buried according to the custom of the Jews (John 19:38-40). If this was so, it would have been impossible for him to walk out of the tomb. In a Jewish burial, the body

When one bows their neck against truth, he is fighting against God!

Revelation 2:10 “. . . be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

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was wrapped three times in white cloth. Once to the armpits, then again to the neck, and finally the head. Spices were mixed in with these burial cloths. We are told that one of them was myrrh, which is like a gummy adhesive. These three layers of cloth were literally glued in place. The total encasement would have weighed 117-120 pounds.

No one, having gone through what Jesus did on the cross, could have wrestled themselves out of that kind of encasement.

THE EMPTY TOMB

On the first day of the week the women found an empty tomb. What are the facts? We know that this was a new tomb, thus his was the only body in the tomb. It was hewn out of rock, so there wasn't a “back door.” A large stone rolled against the door of the tomb. And the tomb was sealed and a guard was posted to keep it undisturbed (Matt. 27:59-28:8). What happened to the body?

The women didn't go to the wrong tomb, they had carefully observed where his body was placed. Jesus did not survive to walk out alive. There is no way he could have moved the stone or gotten past the guard in his critical condition. The disciples didn't steal the body. For one, they didn't understand that he was supposed to rise the third day. And secondly, they couldn't have gotten past the soldiers guarding the tomb. And we know the Jewish leaders didn't steal the body. It would have been in their best interest to keep Jesus' body in the tomb. And if they had it, why didn't they produce it when the apostles began preaching the resurrection some fifty days later?

The only answer: Jesus rose from the dead.

POST-RESURRECTION APPEARANCES

Jesus didn't appear to only one person, on only one occasion. The gospels and Acts record several appearances. Some to individuals, some to groups, sometimes indoors, sometimes outdoors, to different kinds of people. At times they touched Jesus or he ate with them, showing that he was physically present.

1 Corinthians 15:5-8 provides a list of people who saw the risen Lord. When Paul says that the greater part of them remain to this day, he is telling the Corinthians that they could find these people and ask them what they saw. Paul wouldn't make a statement like this if it wasn't true.

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE

Sometimes a strong case is built, not on eyewitness testimony, but on circumstantial evidence. By themselves they may not be very impressive, but placed together they form a wall of evidence that points to the certainty of the resurrection of Jesus.

Bravery of the Disciples. When Jesus was arrested, his disciples fled in fear. Peter later denied him. But after the resurrection they boldly preached the gospel in the face of opposition, persecution and even death. It is not reasonable to believe that these twelve men willingly died for a story they all knew to be false. Men will not die for a lie.

Beginning Place of the Church. The apostles didn't go to some far off place to start preaching the resurrection. The first gospel sermon was preached in Jerusalem, within walking distance of the empty tomb. If the resurrection was a hoax, it would have been easily crushed by the Jewish leaders before it ever got off the ground. Why didn't they just produce Jesus' dead body when Peter preached that he was a witness of the risen Christ (Acts 2:32)? Why? Because there was no body. The tomb was empty!

Conversion of Skeptics. Something extraordinary had to happen to change the minds of some of the Lord's strongest critics. Thomas was the representative of every critic that would come after him. He refused to believe until he put his hands in the wounds on the Lord's body. He saw the evidence he needed and changed from a doubter into a believer (John 20:24-28). James, the brother of the Lord, was not a believer (John 7:5). On at least one occasion he tried to stop Jesus (Mark 3:21). But he went on to become a pillar of the church in Jerusalem (Gal. 1:19). Saul, the feared persecutor of the church, became the beloved apostle Paul. What caused these changes? They saw the risen Savior.

First Day of the Week. The church was originally made up of Jewish converts. The Jews had kept the Sabbath for centuries. One would think they would have kept this custom in the church, but all of a sudden there is a change in the day of worship. The disciples of Jesus met on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7), the day Jesus rose from the dead.

CONCLUSION

Theories come and go, but there is only one event which can logically explain all of these facts — the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

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“Honor” continued from page 2

moved into his later years. His wife was employed at a local company and the family had some of the benefits that others take for granted. At any rate, the decision to fire him put his life in chaos. In his depression he took a gun into the church building and committed suicide.

CROSSING A BROTHER

In any plant that has a union, the union has a grievance

committee to keep the employer from mistreating its employees. In plants with a powerful union, the employer is almost powerless to dismiss a worker, regardless of how poor an employee he is. I have talked to brethren who work for General Motors or Ford Motor Company who tell me about employees who come in drunk on more than one occasion. The company cannot just fire the drunk; rather, they have to pay for him to be sent to a place to “dry out.” Then when he is dry he gets his job back.

One who works in such a plant is frequently the same brother who is ready to fire his preacher for the least reason. He may not like the way he dresses, in how expensive a neighborhood he chooses to live, what kind of car he drives, how long he preaches, his personality, or the ones in the church whom he chooses as his closest friends. Any of these reasons may be sufficient for him to start a campaign to make a change in preachers. If General Motors or Ford Motor Company treated him the same way, he would file a complaint with the union, but he has no qualms about firing the preacher for no good reason except he is tired of listening to him preach (without regard to whether or not anyone else feels the same way). If companies treated their employees like some churches treat their preachers, their human resources department would live in fear of lawsuit and recrimination. But the preacher is expected to keep his mouth shut, uproot his family, and move to some other place, praying that what he experienced at the last place will not happen again in the next place. If you think this description is exaggerated, talk to some preachers to see what is their perception.

On some occasions brethren who desire to fire their preacher want to hide their real motives behind some pretended cause. They go over everything the preacher has said or done, looking for some horse to ride out on. When they find the least speck of evidence to which they might give a slanted interpretation to support their cause, such brethren will destroy the preacher's reputation in order to keep brethren from holding them responsible for what they have done. After this has happened on enough occasions that the church becomes known for what it is doing and a few preachers whom they would like to have work with them let it be known that they are not interested in working with those who would treat their preacher that way, these brethren will say, “Preachers have the strongest union among us.”

HE'S TOO OLD

Like everyone else, preachers get old. What do churches do with old preachers? They fire them and leave them to fend for themselves. At least the old horse is put out to pasture, but the old preacher is fired and sent on his way. How many churches do you know who are providing support for a preacher who has given fifty years of his life to the Lord's cause? That's how many I know as well — none!

As a consequence, preachers find themselves in the awkward situation of being 65-70 years old and being dismissed from a local church. All that they have is social security (those who opted out of social security don't even have this) and what little they have been able to save and invest over the years of their preaching. There is no pension, no medical insurance such as corporations provide for their employees. There is only a "going away" party and a few "we're gonna miss you's." This leads to the sad situation of a brother who has given his life to the Lord's cause being fired at 68 years old and having to find some small church of 30-40 people with whom he can work to supplement what he gets from social security. Generally that means that he must raise outside support to do even that.

If you think this description is exaggerated, ask your local preacher how well he is able to put away something for his retirement on the salary you are paying him.

I ask you quite frankly, "Is this the way to show honor to those who have devoted a lifetime to preaching the gospel?" If "honor your father and mother" meant that

Preachers Needed

Evening Shade, Arkansas: Small church of Christ seeking a full-time preacher. Some outside support will be needed. If interested, send resume to Main Street Church of Christ, Evening Shade, AR 72532 or call Patrick Galligan at 870-266-3629.

McMinnville, Tennessee: The West End Ave. church of Christ is seeking a full-time evangelist. They are a congregation of about 25 members. McMinnville is about 70 miles southeast of Nashville. They can provide limited financial support. If interested, please contact Don Henry at 931-668-5012 or Paul Fredericks at 931-686-3222.

Salem, Oregon: The Market Street church in Salem is looking for an evangelist. They are an established, fully self-supporting congregation of 160 people. If interested, contact Dave Runner c/o Market Street Church of Christ, 3845 Market St., N.E., Salem, OR 97301.

Preacher Available

From Springfield, Missouri
Eddie King, 2460 S. National, Springfield, MO 65804. I am 78 years old and in good health. I have been preaching the gospel

children were to provide for their parents in their old age, does honoring those who have given a lifetime to preaching imply any obligations to provide for them in their old age? Think about it!

CONCLUSION

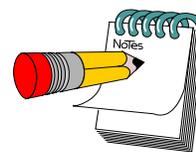
If this is an accurate picture of how brethren treat their preacher, is it any wonder that many preachers quit preaching and find some other source of employment? Is it any wonder that fathers and mothers, who want the very best preacher for their congregation, do not want their sons to grow up to be preachers or for their daughters to marry a preacher? The result is that many who could be serving the Lord by taking the saving gospel to others are working as teachers, bankers, computer programers, and such like jobs. Then brethren wring their hands and lament the preacher shortage!

6567 Kings Ct., Avon, Indiana 46123, mikewillis001@cs.com

for over 25 years. I preach and teach only what the Bible says. I am not preaching for any congregation at this time but I am looking for a group that cannot afford a lot of support. I am married to a good Christian lady. I can come visit, hold a three-day meeting, or on a Sunday. I can be contacted 417-890-0425.

New Congregation Started at Riley, Indiana

Quips & Quotes



"With great delight we announce the establishment of a congregation in Riley, Indiana. The Riley church of Christ will meet each Lord's Day at 9:30 for Bible study, 10:30 for worship and assembly again at 6:00 P.M. They will meet each Wednesday night at 7:00 for Bible study. Though small in number (about twelve including the children) they are large on zeal and determination. For the time being they will meet in the Lion's Club Community Room located at the Corner of State Route 46 and the flashing light in Riley. The community of Riley is approximately ten miles southeast of Terre Haute, therefore within twenty minutes of the ISU and Rose Holman campuses.

"For further information, please contact: Scott Hamilton, 9088 Bono Rd., Terre Haute, IN 47802 (812-298-1721), e-mail: sixham

iltons@earthlink.net.”

Bound Volumes For Sale

The following bound volumes are for sale:

- 31 Hard Bound Volumes of Truth/Guardian of Truth: Volumes XV (1970) to XLV (2001 — \$185.
- 14 Hard Bound Volumes of Searching the Scriptures: Volumes 9 (1968) for 33 (1992) — Two years are bound in each volume — \$85.
- All 14 Soft Bound Volumes of the Gospel Anchor: Complete set 1974 50 1988 — \$85.00

Condition: All volumes are in good condition with tight bindings. There is occasional writing in some of them. Six of the Anchor’s softcover bindings have been carefully hand sewn.

Additional Terms: Buyer pays all shipping.

Call or e-mail Brent Phillips in Phoenix, AZ. Home phone: 623-486-2736. E-mail: gbppap@cox.net.

Canada Gives Gays Hope For Change

“Toronto — . . . Two weeks ago, Ontario’s highest court struck down Canada’s ban on same-sex marriages. Days later, Canada’s ruling Liberal government gave its blessing to legislation that would extend the ruling to every province.

“A majority here approve — yet another fissure with the USA, after Canada’s snub of the Iraq invasion and its move to decriminalize marijuana.

“This country’s historic shift is expected to embolden efforts in the USA to legalize same-sex marriage and provide a basis for lawsuits if Canadian marriages of gay Americans are rejected at home.

“It is the beginning of a true debate in this country on what marriage itself really is,’ said Patrick Fagan, a research fellow at the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank.

“The U.S. Supreme Court’s rebuff last week of a Texas sodomy law, barring states from prosecuting private sex acts between consenting adults, also bodes well for change, experts say” (USA Today [June 30, 2003], 3A).

Study: Children of Divorce Are Hurt by a Parent’s Move

“Dallas — Children of divorce whose parents don’t live near each other may be at risk for long-term problems, among them poorer health, greater hostility and less financial support for college, new research suggests.

“The study, by scientists at Arizona State University in Tempe, provides an unprecedented snapshot of the impact of a broken home with far-flung pieces vs. one in which the parents stay geographically close.

“ . . . What we found is that when children whose parents have divorced experience a move away from either of their parents, they do less well on a variety of indices,’ said Sanford Braver, lead author of the study, which was released Wednesday. ‘In other words, they suffer, and they are more likely to have problems.’

“The researchers focused on 602 Arizona State students whose parents were divorced, comparing those whose parents stayed near the original family home with those who had at least one parent who at some point relocated more than an hour away, with or without the student. Sixty-one percent of the students either moved, or had a parent move, such a distance.

“Overall, those with a geographically distant parent fared worse on 11 or 14 measures of well-being, the scientists report in the current Journal of Family Psychology.

“ . . . Students with a distant parent also tended to be more hostile and have more distress from the divorce, and — collectively — have more difficulty with personal adjustment. The troubles with adjustment — as well as a generally lower life satisfaction and more hostility — traced mainly to the most infrequent situations, those where the child either stayed with or moved with the father, the scientists found.

“ . . . The youngsters who had been in the custody of their fathers looked considerably more troubled, and that’s very serious,’ she said.

“Students with a distant parent also had lower self-ratings of physical health, lower perceived levels of each parent’s emotional support and lower rankings of both parents as role models” (The Indianapolis Star [June 29, 2003], A14).

Reflections

by R.L. Whiteside

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