



## Trivial Pursuit?

Lewis Willis

From many years ago, I recall a game that people played called “Trivial Pursuit.” I can’t say I remember the format of the game, just the name of it. However, it came to mind recently when I saw some commercials on television.

Let me place this brief article in a scriptural context. The apostle John wrote: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:15-17). Is it not apparent that love for the world and its things is a prevailing danger? Could I be in danger? Could you be in danger? It’s something to consider!

Furthermore, the apostle Paul sounded the same warning, placing the danger in the context of flesh vs. Spirit: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit . . . For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after

the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:1, 5-8). The word translated “mind” is translated “to think of, be mindful of” (Vine III:70). Thayer adds the thought: “to direct one’s mind to a thing, to seek or strive for . . . to pursue those things which gratify the flesh” (658). Thus it signifies to think of, or to seek after the things of the flesh, instead of being mindful of spiritual things. Modern man has a significant problem with this error.

Our world is burdened with an unspeakable weight of sin. Sometimes we are personally in a state of condemnation. All of us have family, friends, and co-workers who stand condemned before God (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). Everyday we see new manifestations of man’s determination to rebel against the right ways of the Lord.

So, what is man’s response to this danger? Instead of being concerned see “Trival Pursuits” on p. 696

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## Psalm 8: Man's Place in God's Creation

Mike Willis

One's concept of man affects his concepts of God and morality. Without an accurate understanding of who man is, one will not understand his responsibilities toward God and his eternal destiny.

Modern man's concept of himself is largely affected by the evolutionary model. Based on the atheistic model, man is but the chance development of colliding molecules and atoms. Although some might think that man is more highly developed on the evolutionary scale, such a perception must presuppose a scale by which to determine what is higher and lower. Given another scale than one which we arbitrarily assume, man may be on the lower end of the scale of evolutionary development (after all, some species of life are much more capable of surviving disasters than is man). Man's life is relatively short-lived compared with that of an oak or a redwood and even some beasts.

If man is but the chance development of cells, then he is no different than those other living species which have developed through the ages. In the cycle of life, a man's life is no more important than is that of the spotted owl or snail darter. And, when man's welfare comes into conflict with that of another species, the factor which some contemporary men choose to follow for determining which course of action to follow is to decide which course of action affects less negatively the more endangered species. Logging families may be left in financial distress in the northwest because logging certain timber will endanger the spotted owl; projects which might employ thousands are put on hold because they may threaten an endangered species.

Man's place in nature's scheme needs to be reasserted. David spoke of man's place in God's plan in Psalm 8 (NKJV) as follows:

O LORD, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all the earth,  
Who have set Your glory above the heavens!  
Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants  
You have ordained strength,  
Because of Your enemies,  
That You may silence the enemy and the avenger.  
When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,

*see "Psalm 8" on p. 696*



# Events at the Second Coming of Christ

Connie W. Adams

The promise of the second coming of our Lord has produced many beneficial results. It offers hope to the faithful and instills fear in the ungodly. While the righteous can confidently say, “Even so, Come Lord Jesus,” for the wicked such a prospect is fraught with terror, for “our God is a consuming fire.” It is the expectation of his coming that stimulates evangelism. We do not know when he shall come and, therefore, it is urgent that we be ready at all times. We must reach all with the gospel message “while it is day.” This hope challenges us to devotion. “Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself” (1 John 3:3). In light of his coming Peter asked, “What manner of persons ought ye to be?” (2 Pet. 3:11).

While the doctrine of the second coming of Christ is such a vital part of Scripture, it is a shame that false teachers have so confused the minds of people as to exactly what is to take place at his coming. Let’s see if we can set the record straight.

**The second coming of Christ will be the end of the world.** “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Pet. 3:10). In the context of that passage we learn that this deals with the “promise of his coming” (v. 4). Right now, the world is “reserved unto fire against the day of judgment” (v. 7). “The day of the Lord” of verse 10 is the day that fulfills the “promise of his coming.” It is the day when all that pertains to this earth will be destroyed. That plays havoc with the agenda of the dispensationalists who have an elaborate scheme worked out about what will happen on the earth after the second coming of Christ. They speak of his coming in different stages, of rapture, tribulation, and a literal reign upon a literal throne in literal Jerusalem for a literal one thousand years. But the Bible says that at the second coming this earth and the works therein shall be “burned up.” Jesus left in clouds and, according to angelic promise, will return in clouds (Acts 1:9-11). Paul said we will meet him “in the air” (1 Thess. 4:17).

Well, what about the “new heavens and new earth”? Whatever that will be, this present earth will not be associated with it, for the present heaven and earth “shall be burned up.” The expression “new heaven and a new earth” is used to describe a new dwelling place which God is preparing for his own. The coming of Christ is the end (1 Cor. 1:7-8).

**All the dead shall be raised at his coming.** Speculators tell us there

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will a thousand and seven years between the raising of the righteous and the wicked. But Jesus said, "The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28-29). The same "hour" the righteous come forth is the same "hour" the wicked are raised. There is no one thousand year period between the raising of the righteous and the wicked. 1 Thesalonians 4:13-18 does not teach it, either, for that passage only deals with the issue of the righteous dead as opposed to the living in Christ at the time of his coming. The subject of the wicked dead was not mentioned at all.

**At his coming the kingdom will be delivered up to God.** "But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power" (1 Cor. 15:23-24). Instead of taking up rule and authority at his second coming, Paul said he will "deliver" it to the Father. Something is dreadfully wrong with the time table of the speculators.

**His second coming will be the end of preparation to meet God.** The parable of the wise and foolish virgins teaches that when the master returned, "the door was shut" (Matt. 25:1-13). Then the time of preparation will be ended. False teachers hold out false hope to unconverted Jews by

teaching that the door will be left open for them to have another chance to get in. But the time to prepare for his return is while the master is in "the far country" (heaven), not after he returns from it. That is when the door will be shut. There is no room left for a thousand years between the return and the accounting of the servants. Such teaching as we hear so often these days runs counter to what the Bible teaches about God's impartiality. He treats Jews and Gentiles alike and offers the same gospel hope to both. It is wrong to teach Jewish people to glory "in the flesh."

**His coming will institute the judgment of all men.** Matthew 25:31-46 shows that when he comes, he will sit on the throne of his glory and will separate the wicked from the righteous. Notice the order in the passage: he comes in glory, *then* he shall sit upon his throne, before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them. This passage leaves no room for a thousand years between his coming and the judgment of all men.

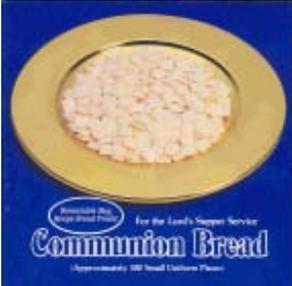
The first coming of Christ accomplished all God meant for it to do. His mission of salvation is complete (Eph. 1:7-10). His revelation is complete (Jude 3). His authority is complete for he has it "all" (Matt. 28:18). His kingdom is complete. The Colossians were in it (Col. 1:13). John was in it (Rev. 1:9). It cannot be moved (Heb. 12:28). His throne is complete (Rev. 3:21). Not long before his arrest, trials, and crucifixion, Jesus prayed to his Father and said, "I have finished the work thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). Then in verse 11 he said, "I am no more in the world." Every millennialist would have to argue with the Lord on that, for they are just certain that he was mistaken about it and that he will be yet in the world for a literal 1,000 years. They do not understand the book of Revelation and the twentieth chapter in particular. They have no understanding of the difference between literal and figurative language in the Bible. They have a false concept of the prophetic books of the Old Testament which provide the backdrop for the symbolism of the book of Revelation. Not understanding that, they seize upon that thousand years out of a passage which assures victory for the cause of Christ in the interest of martyred saints and, missing that point, weave an elaborate agenda of speculation which bends and twists the whole Bible out of shape to make it fit this notion.

The Lord is coming for the purposes stated in this article, plus a few others the Bible teaches but space forbids our treating here. It will be to our eternal advantage to watch and pray and maintain constant readiness for the trumpet to sound and for all things temporal to end. Are YOU ready?

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# The Rapture

Frank Himmel

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No aspect of premillennialism creates more excitement than the rapture. You've heard the stories — cars abandoned by their drivers, people vanishing from parties, etc. What happened? Christians were secretly caught up to be with the Lord while the rest are left behind.

That those in Christ will be caught up in the air to be with him is not questioned; the Bible plainly says so (1 Thess. 4:17). But when will that occur and in what relation to unbelievers? Premillennialists always tie the rapture to the tribulation, the seven-year period of extreme misery they say will immediately precede Jesus' thousand-year reign. Some have the rapture at the end of the tribulation, others at the midpoint, most at the beginning. Let us look at the two major proof texts.

1 Corinthians 15:50-55: "Behold I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet . . ." Premillennialists tell us this change takes place at the tribulation. When did Paul, the inspired author, say it would occur? He gives three time indicators.

**1. At the last trumpet.** A trumpet blast is a summons. Paul said it is the last one. Obviously, premillennialists have a problem here: they tell us the final summons does not occur for another thousand years after the rapture. Some try to avoid the difficulty by saying *last* means last in a sequence. But there is no sequence of trumpets in this text.

**2. When the dead are raised.** Premillennialism has multiple resurrections. This one, they say, is the resurrection of New Testament saints; the wicked do not rise until after Jesus' thousand-year reign. The Bible knows but one future bodily resurrection. Jesus said *an* hour (*the* hour, KJV) is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear his voice and come forth, both the good and the evil (John 5:28-29).

**3. When death is swallowed up in victory.** Paul says that when the change he is describing occurs, "then will

come about the saying that is written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'" Is death swallowed in victory at the beginning of the tribulation? Hardly! It is a time of much death, including the death of some who become believers during that period. Besides, according to the theory, believers who lived in the Old Testament era and all dead unbelievers are not yet raised. Death is still alive and well!

Paul is discussing the resurrection throughout this chapter. These verses make the point that when it occurs, the dead will be raised with an imperishable body to prepare them for eternity, and those then living will be instantly changed into that same form. All of this will occur at Jesus' second coming. Having then conquered the last enemy, death, he ceases his reign (vv. 24-28). If anyone is left behind, either dead or subject to death, death is not conquered and Paul's argument fails.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18: "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord."

The Lord's shout, the voice of the archangel, the trumpet of God — that sounds mighty noisy to me. Do you really think folks will not hear it, then later wonder where all the Christians went?

Premillennialism assumes that when Paul says the dead in Christ shall rise first, that implies the dead out of Christ will rise later. But consider the context. Paul is not contrasting those who rise first and those who rise later, neither is he comparing the dead in Christ with the dead out of Christ. The comparison is between those in Christ who have died and those in him who are still living when he returns. The former will not miss anything, as some of the Thessalonians evidently feared (v. 13). No, they will rise first, then those who are alive will be caught up together

# Worshiping While On Vacation

Kyle Pope

As you travel from place to place the next time you're on vacation think about some reasons it is important to take the time to find a faithful group of Christians to worship with while you are away.

**It encourages other Christians.** All over the world Christians struggle with faithfulness, both as individuals and as congregations. Especially in smaller congregations it can offer a real "shot in the arm" to brethren to meet those who love the Lord from other places.

**It teaches our children.** Taking the time to find a local church to worship with teaches our children who travel with us that, while vacations may be fun, there is also a place for the Lord in our times of relaxation.

**It teaches those who are with us.** Often vacations involve time with friends or family who do not share our faith. It can have a strong impact on those we love to see us happily and anxiously set aside our entertainment for awhile to focus on spiritual things.



**It edifies us.** Brethren in other places are doing great work. They have great insights, energy, and zeal. Learning from their strengths and weaknesses can help us better serve the congregation we work with and (in some cases) be more thankful for what we have.

**It pleases the Lord.** When the Lord instructs us in Hebrews 10:24, 25 to "... consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (NKJV), he is talking about the way we should live our lives all year round. We should never adopt a mentality that looks for the "minimum daily requirements" that fulfills these instructions. While worship on the Lord's day with the local church where we regularly worship is important, that is not

all that Hebrews 10:24, 25 addresses. Mid-week studies, gospel meetings in the area, and worship services in other places, are all assemblies of God's people striving to grow. We must remember that fellowship with the Lord means that we have fellowship with his people, whether locally or in other places (1 John 1:1-4).

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with them. All will share alike. Those out of Christ, dead or alive, are not in view in this paragraph.

Notice also 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10. It says those who afflict God's people will pay the penalty of eternal destruction when he comes to be glorified with his saints, not 1,000 or so years later.

Folks, the thing that is left behind in all this talk about the rapture is the truth.

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It is impossible to  
be rightly governed  
without God and the

# Baptism: Is It An Outward Sign Of An Inward Grace?

Kenneth D. Sils

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Many denominational preachers are ringing out the message that water baptism is “an outward sign of an inward grace.” Just listening to this phrase, one gets struck with a sense of “it must be right, it sounds so ecclesiastical!” This phrase may have a wonderful ring to it, but for those who follow it to the end will discover the chime of death and falsehood. The Bible never defines or even alludes to the denominational notion that baptism in the name of Jesus Christ is “an outward sign of an inward grace.”

When this phrase is closely analyzed within today’s denominational framework, baptism has no power other than voicing to men that one has *already been “saved”* by the grace of God. Those who preach this montra teach that men come to God through faith and repentance and are “saved” when they accept Jesus into their hearts by confessing to be sinners before Christ. Afterwards, they may get baptized to show the world that they are already disciples of Jesus Christ, therefore, “an outward sign of an inward grace.” Often, those who have been “saved” must wait for days, weeks, or even months before they can get baptized. Proponents of this doctrine also teach that, if one dies before he had the opportunity to be baptized at the scheduled time, heaven will still be his reward. This baptism is nothing more than an outward sign, just like being hospitable is an outward sign of discipleship. Here is the conclusion to this dogma: baptism has absolutely nothing to do with salvation, it merely informs others that you are already saved from sin through grace.

The Bible teaches that water baptism *is* God’s chosen vehicle to bring grace to those who are lost in sin. In Romans 6:3-7, we learn that the Romans crucified the body of sin with their baptism, not before they were baptized. When they were raised from the watery grave of baptism, they began to walk in a newness of life. Why? Because they were now freed from sin. Baptism involves the crucifixion of the body of sin and the acceptance of a new way of living. This is the point of conversion. This is the moment

that God’s grace enters the life of man. God’s grace begins with the action of releasing man from the slavery of sin. Notice what Peter taught to those who were guilty of killing Jesus in Acts 2:36-41. He taught the remission of sins was accomplished through their repentance and baptism . . . not a “sinner’s prayer.” Peter continued to urge them to be saved and they complied with his plea by being baptized that very day.

Salvation and baptism cannot be separated because the grace of God involves the remission of man’s sins. Truly, God does all the removing of sins, but he commands man to be baptized in order to have his sins removed. God’s grace isn’t extended until one crucifies the body of sin in one’s life and the New Testament tells us exactly how that is done. We become a disciple of Jesus by being baptized, not before (Mark 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). The sin of man is washed away only through baptism and not before (Acts 22:16). Baptism isn’t “an outward sign of an inward grace.” Baptism is God’s command for all in order to receive his wonderful life-saving grace and forgiveness of sin. A baptism that does anything else isn’t New Testament baptism and those refusing it are still in their sin.

How gullible man can be when he hears something that sound theological. Satan is nobody’s fool! He knows the art of deception and has his ministers hard at work to keep sincerely religious people in his kingdom (2 Cor. 11:14-15). You can know Satan’s devices and you can escape the theology of the world by accepting the doctrine of Christ as the only religious standard for man today. Do what Jesus commands to do to be saved as we read in Mark 16:16, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” To do anything less nullifies all hope. Don’t be deceived with slick denominational packaging!

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# He Exalted Himself Against the Lord

Joe R. Price

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Israel had many enemies during their occupation of the land of promise. One particularly troublesome enemy of the people of God was Moab. Early in the history of Israel the Moabites tried to obstruct the progress of God's people (Num. 22-24). King Balak tried to enlist Balaam's support against Israel, but the Spirit of God used Balaam to bless Israel while speaking prophetic judgments against Moab (Num. 24:17).

Throughout the history of Israel God's prophets continued to make clear that God would bring his judgment upon the sins of Moab. Amos (2:1-3), Isaiah (15; 16:6-14), Zephaniah (2:8-10), and Ezekiel (25:8-11) all had something to say about Moab's sin and God's vengeance against it. The most extensive statement of God's judgment against Moab is found in Jeremiah 48. At first glance, God's judgment against Moab may seem far removed from us. But, God's word against Moab contains valuable lessons for us today (Rom. 15:4).

Moab had a fundamental problem that revealed itself in specific ways. The basic problem was that "he exalted himself against the Lord" (Jer. 48:26). To exalt (magnify, ASV) means to grow, enlarge, or make great. Moab, being situated in a strategically secure region, was taken with itself and refused to respect God. Through his prophet Jeremiah, God assured that "Moab shall be destroyed as a people, because he exalted himself against the Lord" (Jer. 48:42). How pathetic is the person (or nation) who exalts himself before Almighty God. Such a prideful attitude of disregard and contempt for God inevitably leads to more sin. Moab no longer exists. God's judgment against Moab has been accomplished. Let us now consider Moab's sins so that we can examine ourselves and avoid similar condemnation (2 Cor. 13:5).

## Moab's trust in his riches reflected the exalted view

**he had of himself.** "For because you have trusted in your works and your treasures, you also shall be taken" (Jer. 48:7). The love of money continues to be the root of all kinds of evil (1 Tim. 6:10). Money is a method of exchange that enables the trade of goods and services, thereby sustaining and enhancing life. Money, in and of itself, is not evil. Being poor does not make one righteous any more than being wealthy makes one a sinner. It is one's attitude of heart toward money that causes the unrighteous use and sinful preeminence of wealth in the lives of people. Moab's treasures would be plundered and her cities destroyed; this was a judgment from God that serves as a historical reminder to be rich toward God (Jer. 48:7-8; Matt. 6:19-21; 1 Tim. 6:17-19).

## Moab was also guilty of complacency and indifference.

"Moab has been at ease from his youth" (Jer. 48:11-12). Moab's relative geographic isolation had shielded it from the full destructive force of invading armies. The nation had lived in ease and was now "settled on his dregs" (Jer. 48:11). Moab's ease led to pride and indifference. Zephaniah rendered a similar judgment against the men of Jerusalem (Zeph. 1:12). Similarly, the advantages of our country tend to cause a complacent pride within us. We seem so secure from outside oppression. Our ease of life is renown throughout the world. But have we allowed the way we view our blessings to become the eventual cause of our condemnation? For instance, September 11 should have served as a "wake up" call for Americans to turn back to God. Furthermore, if Christians are "at ease in Zion" then we (like Moab) will fall under God's wrath (Amos 6:1-6). We must be vigilant, never sleeping, always abounding in the work of the Lord (Rom. 12:11; 1 Thess. 5:1-11; 1 Cor. 15:58).

**Although Moab trusted in the might of his army, God's destroyer would reduce him to calamity.** "How can you say, 'We are mighty and strong men for the war'?"

Moab is plundered and gone up from her cities . . . the calamity of Moab is near at hand, and his affliction comes quickly” (Jer. 48:14-18). Moab’s trust was misplaced. Moab depended on the strength and power of men instead of honoring God. We can become far too trusting in our own power and ability. Genuine faith in God renders trust in men useless. Faith looks to God for strength, for security, for sustenance. Isaiah rebuked the faithless of Israel when he said, “Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord!” (Isa. 31:1). We must place our trust in the promises, power, and presence of God to save us and secure our souls (Heb. 13:5-6; 6:13-20; Rom. 8:37).

**Moab’s pride caused him to mock the people of God.** “For was not Israel a derision to you? . . . For whenever you speak of him, you shake your head in scorn” (Jer. 48:26-31). Zephaniah equated Moab’s pride with making threats against the people of God (Zeph. 2:10). Whenever we speak against God’s people, we align ourselves against God himself (cf. 1 John 4:20). Imagine that: sinful man arrogantly elevating himself above the Holy God. But that is exactly what pride does. More that lifting one up above his fellow man, it exalts man above God. We must cast away every trace of pride toward man and God, or we too will fall under the wrath of God (Jas. 4:6-7; 1 Pet. 5:5-6).

**Moab’s idolatry was another way he exalted himself against the Lord.** “Moreover,” says the Lord, “I will cause to cease in Moab the one who offers sacrifices in the high places and burns incense to his gods” (Jer. 48:35). The worship of made-made gods has always been deplorable to the only true God. Idolatry has not gone out of fashion since the days of Moab. If we elevate anything to a degree of honor in our lives higher than God, we become idolaters (Col. 3:5). If God does not have first place in our life, then we are also idolaters.

**God extended mercy to Moab in the coming Christ.** “Yet I will bring back the captives of Moab in the latter days,” says the Lord (Jer. 48:47; cf. Isa. 11:11-16). We are eternally thankful that God is merciful toward us in Christ, saving us “by grace . . . through faith” (Eph. 2:4-9). Salvation by grace through faith leaves no room for boasting (exalting) before God (Eph. 2:9; cf. Rom. 3:19-20; 4:1-5).

Sin enlarges man against God. Yet, God offers mercy to every sinner in his Son, Jesus Christ (Isa. 59:1-2; Col.

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## Could the Bible Be Reproduced From Our Writings?

John Isaac Edwards

One of the great evidences of the New Testament is the quotations made from the New Testament books by early authors. In J.W. McGarvey’s work, *The Text and the Canon* (83), McGarvey comments that writers made “many and copious quotations from the books of the New Testament, so many and so copious that the opinion has sometimes been expressed that the whole New Testament, if it were lost, could be reproduced out of the Christian writings of the first four centuries.”

I got to thinking about that and began wondering, “Could such an opinion be expressed of us today?” New Testament preachers appealed to the Scriptures (Acts 8:35; Rom. 4:3; Gal. 4:30), and many today seem to be getting away from that. What greater source of teaching material is there than the Scriptures “given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16)? If someday the Bible were to become lost, could it be reproduced from our writings? Are we using enough Scripture?

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200 N. Posey St., Salem, Indiana 47167

# God's Last Word To Mankind

Revelation 22  
Russell Dunaway

Many have a fascination with last words.

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## God's Last Word to Mankind . . .

- last word about his word
- last beatitude to mankind
- last promise to mankind
- last warning to sinners
- last invitation to the sinner

There are web sites devoted to the last words spoken by famous persons. I can recall to this day the last words spoken to me by my father. Last words are often important and serious words. In Revelation 22, the last chapter of the Bible, we have an inspired record of God's last words to humanity. There are many important lessons that can be learned from God's last word to mankind. Let us notice a few of them.

**First, our text contains God's last word about his word!** The Holy Spirit informs us that God's word is "faithful and true" (Rev. 22:6). Because his word is true, God's last word about his word is that we must not add anything to his word, and we must not take anything from it (Rev. 22:18-19). This has always been God's word about his word. In Deuteronomy 4:2 Moses cautioned Israel, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you." Notice that the reason we are commanded to neither add to nor take from God's word is in order that we may "keep the commandments of the Lord your God." Anytime you add something to God's word, it ceases to be God's word. In like manner, anytime you take something from God's word, it ceases to be God's word! In Deuteronomy 12:32 Moses added, "Whatever I command you, you shall

be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it." Agur warns us in Proverbs 30:5-6, "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." God's word about his word has always been the same, i.e., don't add anything to it, and don't take anything from it. We must never deliberately tamper with Scripture. Those who know and love God will treat his word with the utmost respect.

It seems that the greatest problem in the religious world today is that many have never learned to treat God's word with the respect it deserves. Too many prefer to add to and take from God's word. Most of the religious world likes to take from God's word with regard to salvation. Whereas Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16), many prefer to take away the expression, "and is baptized," advocating salvation by faith only. Many take away faith and repentance, practicing infant baptism. The subjects of Bible baptism were not infants. Rather, they were accountable beings who had been taught, learned, believed, repented of their sins, and confessed their faith. Infant baptism is not found in God's word. It is an addition made by men who do not respect God's word as they should. Others want to add something to God's word, telling people that to

be saved they need to say the sinner's prayer. Where, pray tell, can one find the sinner's prayer in God's word? It is not there. It is an addition men make to the word of God. Men like to add to God's word with regard to worship. Hence, they have introduced mechanical instruments of music into the worship of the church. You cannot find mechanical instruments of music in the worship of the church in God's word! It is not there. To utilize the instrument, one must add to God's word. To please God, we must respect his word by doing exactly what his word says to do, adding nothing to it and taking nothing from it.

**Second, our text contains God's last beatitude to mankind.** In Revelation 22:14, Jesus said, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." The term "blessed," where God is referred to, has the sense of "praise," as in 1 Samuel 25:32, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel." But where man is in mind, the term is used in the sense of "happy" or "favored." It is most frequently used in this manner in the Psalms and the Gospels. For example, David wrote, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly" (Ps. 1:1). Jesus taught, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matt. 5:3), etc. To be truly happy or favored by God, we must do his commandments. In Luke 6:46, Jesus asked the multitude, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Jesus is "the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him" (Heb. 5:8-9).

Other translations read, "Blessed are those who wash their robes . . ." In Revelation 7:14, one of the twenty-four elders said to John, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in

the blood of the Lamb." The metaphor of soiled clothes is utilized in Isaiah 64:6 and in Zechariah 3:3 to represent sinfulness. Other Scriptures speak of the cleansing of sin that accompanies salvation (Isa. 1:18; Tit. 3:5; Acts 22:16). The agency through which this cleansing comes is the blood of Christ (Rev. 1:5; 5:9; 7:14; Matt. 26:28; Acts 20:28; Rom. 3:24-25; Eph. 1:7; 1 John 1:7). That blood, which was shed on the cross of Calvary, is contacted in baptism (Rom. 6:3-4; Acts 22:16). Those who are baptized into Christ for the remission of their sins have experienced the washing from sin. As a result, they *have right to the tree of life*.

**Third, in our text we have God's last promise to mankind.** In verse 12, Jesus said, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give

every man according as his work shall be." Again, in verse 20, John wrote, "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." God's last promise to mankind is that Jesus will come again. Though scoffers may mockingly ask, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation" (2 Pet. 3:4). Peter pointed out the error of the scoffers by observing that all things do not continue as they were from the beginning. God destroyed the world by flood in the days of Noah. And things will not continue forever as they are now. Jesus will return. Of course, we need not speculate about when he will return. Jesus said,

But of that day and that hour

knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch (Mark 13:42-47).

Because we do not know when the Lord will come, we must be ready always, so that whether he comes at even, or at midnight, or at daybreak, we will be ready to meet him. God's last promise to mankind is that Jesus will indeed come again. The next sound to be heard from heaven will be at the second coming of Christ, for "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first" (1 Thess. 4:16).

**Fourth, our text contains God's last warning to sinners.** John wrote, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (vv. 11-12). This warning sounds a little awkward perhaps, but it need not. The warning it contains is that people's response to the truth now will determine their eternal destinies. God here divides man into two groups: the unjust and filthy, and the righteous and holy. The point is not that God wants any man

to fall into the unjust and filthy group, but that after death or at the second coming of Christ there will be no second chance for one to change his condition before God. If you wish to stand just and righteous before God in the day of judgment, you must take advantage of the opportunity you have now to obey the gospel of Christ and have your sins forgiven. Those who reject the truth and continue to do evil remain defiled by sin. Your response to God's word in this life will determine your eternal destiny. When you die, or when the Lord returns, your eternal destiny will be forever fixed. As Solomon expressed it, "If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be" (Eccl. 11:3). God's last warning to the sinner is that you had better obtain forgiveness and turn your life around now before it is everlastingly too late. By the way, have your robes been made white in the blood of the Lamb? Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

**Finally, our text presents God's last invitation to the sinner.** In verse 17, John wrote, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." According to A.T. Robertson's *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, it seems that there are two distinct invitations in this verse. The first part of the verse is a prayer addressed to Christ. Robertson wrote, "The Holy Spirit, speaking through the prophets . . . joins with the bride . . . the people of God, in a response to the voice of Jesus just heard. After the picture of heaven in Revelation 22:1-5 there is intense longing of God's people for the consummation of the marriage of the Lamb and the Bride. So now 'the prophets and the saints' (Swete) make a common plea to the Lord Jesus to 'come.'" Throughout

the centuries, the faithful of God have always waited for, prayed for, hoped for, and watched for Christ's return. Weary of the battle against sin, they long to see Jesus. They desire his return for them, to take them to heaven to live with him forever (John 14:3; 1 Thess. 4:17). They long for the resurrection day when their mortal bodies will be transformed into immortal bodies (1 Cor. 15:50-54). They know that in that glorious day there will be no more sorrow, no more tears, no more crying, no more pain, and no more death. They love Christ and long for his appearing (see 2 Tim. 4:6-8). "The Spirit and the Bride say 'Come.'"

The second part of this verse, however, is an invitation addressed to sinners. That is God's last invitation to man. The first part of the verse calls for Christ to come; the second part is the last call for sinners to come to faith in Christ. That invitation is to all men everywhere. Jesus invited, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30). Jesus wants all men to be saved. He invites all men to come unto him. "Whosoever will" may come to Jesus and take the water of life freely. In John 7:37, Jesus gave the invitation, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." In Revelation 21:6, he promised, "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." Here, "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." This is God's last invitation to the sinner. Have you heeded that invitation?

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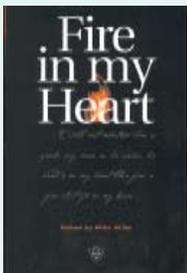
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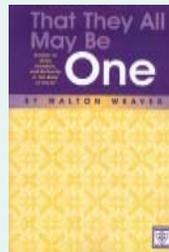


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# We Will Not

Irvin Himmel

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In the days of the prophet Jeremiah, the people of Judah and Jerusalem were stubborn. When called upon to consider their alternatives, they were tenaciously unwilling to yield. “Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls” (Jer. 6:16). This was Jeremiah’s appeal and challenge.

Their answer to the prophet’s urgent supplication was, “We will not walk therein.” The “old paths” were of no interest to them. The way of the heathen had more appeal than the good way. The way of Moses and the faithful prophets who had gone before had been cast aside long ago.

Today, when we plead with people to seek the “old paths” (the way set forth by Christ and the apostles), the response from many is, “We will not walk therein.” They do not wish to be restricted to the New Testament. They are attracted to the new, the novel, the modern, the fashionable, the popular, the contemporary, and the up-to-date.

Jehovah reminded the Jews of Judah and Jerusalem: “Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet” (Jer. 6:17). Faithful prophets had been sent as sentinels or watchmen. They had sounded the trumpet. Alarm after alarm had been trumpeted. But the people said, “We will not hearken.”

The gospel of Christ includes trumpet-like warnings. It warns of the consequences of neglect (Heb. 2:1-4). It warns of the dangers of apostasy (1 Cor. 10:1-12). It warns against deceptions (Eph. 4:14). It warns against unbelief (Heb. 3:12). It warns of the fate of those who know not God and obey not the gospel (2 Thess. 1:7-9). It warns against covetousness (Luke 12:15). It warns of false prophets and false teachers (2 Pet. 2:1-3; 1 John 4:1). Notwithstanding all such alarms, the attitude of many is, “We will not hearken.”

Jeremiah’s pleas and warnings went unheeded. The Lord declared, “I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit

of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it” (Jer. 6:19). Most of the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem were taken into exile by the Babylonians. A small group remained in the land. Later, out of fear of the Babylonians, that group went into Egypt. Jeremiah cautioned that disaster would result. God would bless them if they remained in Judah. They refused to listen to the courageous prophet and forced him to go to Egypt with them.

In the land of Egypt, Jeremiah pointed out that the people had disobeyed God by leaving Judah and were again involved in idolatrous worship. They had learned nothing from the Lord’s previous judgments. The prophet foretold that divine wrath would be poured out on the Jews in Egypt. The people, men and women alike, openly rejected his message. They answered, “As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee” (Jer. 44:16).

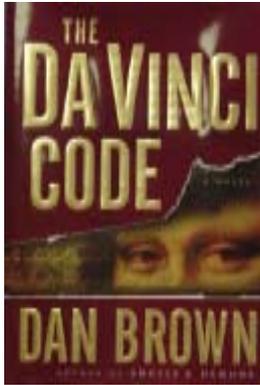
What a miserable and incorrigible people these Jews were! “Ingratitude, hypocrisy, rebellion, and cruelty seem to have been enthroned in their hearts” (Adam Clarke).

In sharp contrast to people whose attitude is like that of Jeremiah’s contemporaries, there are honest, God-fearing folks who want to walk in the “old paths” and who do hearken to the warnings of God. On the day of Pentecost, about three thousand people gladly received the gospel and were baptized (Acts 2:41). When Philip the evangelist preached the gospel in Samaria, the people “with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake” (Acts 8:5-6). Cornelius and his house were eager to hear and obey (Acts 10).

Let us never react to God’s commands, warnings, and exhortations by saying, “We will not” take heed.

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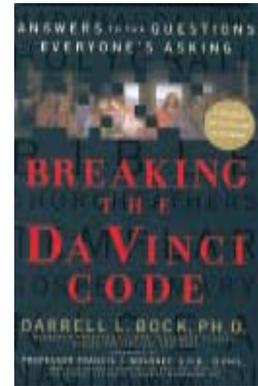


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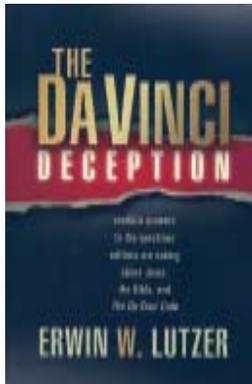


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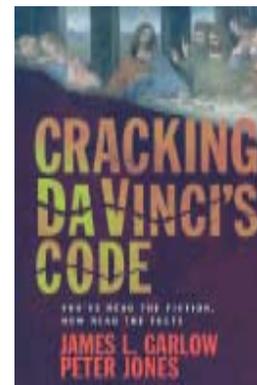


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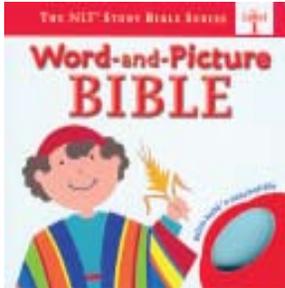
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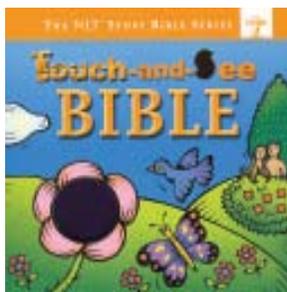
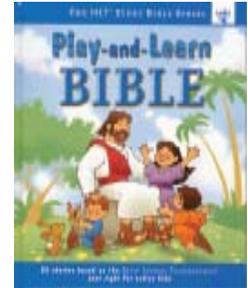
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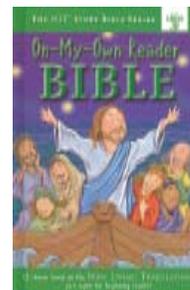
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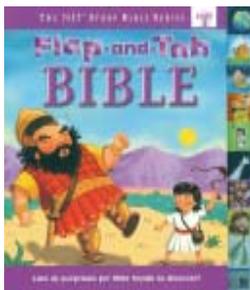
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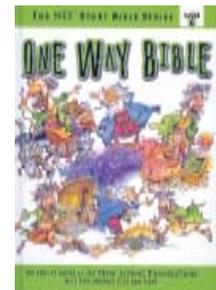
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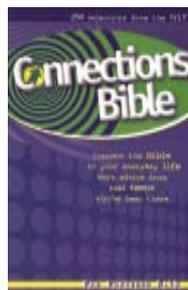
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# Teen Suicide

Bobby Witherington

Fifteen-year-old Charles Bishop made national headlines on Saturday afternoon, January 5, 2002 when he flew a Cessna 172 plane into the twenty-eighth floor of the Bank of America Plaza in downtown Tampa. Many immediately thought of the events of September 11, but there were no further indications of planned Terrorism — other than a suicide note found in his pocket which police say “expressed sympathy for Osama bin Laden and support for the attacks” of September 11. However, teachers and others who knew Charles Bishop give a different report, saying that he was saddened by the events of 9/11 and that he had voiced patriotism for his country.

No doubt there will be other bits and pieces of information which will filter in about young Charles Bishop, but only God knows what actually went through his mind. He was evidently a very troubled youth, and our hearts go out to his deeply saddened family and friends, many of whom find it difficult to reconcile the Charles Bishop they thought they knew with the action he took on that day.

But the primary focus in this article is not on young Charles Bishop personally; rather it is suicide in general and teen suicide in particular. For most of us, suicide is unthinkable, and people who are mature in years, as a rule, cannot fathom the idea of a young, healthy, intelligent teen, in a world so full of opportunity, deliberately taking his, or her, own life. However, this is a phenomena of increasing frequency. In fact, from a brochure published by the Florida Alcohol and Drug Abuse Association, we cite the following statistics:

Suicide among teenagers and young adults has doubled over the past ten years and is now the second leading cause of death for this age group. For every teenage suicide there are 50 to 100 other self-destruction acts that do not result in death. One-third of all teens who survive these acts will try suicide again within two years. Girls are three times more likely to attempt suicide than boys. Boys, however, succeed more often because they are likely to use violent

means such as firearms, hanging, jumping from heights, or in front of moving vehicles.

Someone has said that “being a teen today isn’t what it used to be.” The situation just cited would seem to confirm that statement. Of course, committing suicide is not confined to modern times. Biblically, we can read of several who committed suicide. There was Abimelech, a son of Gideon, who aspired to be king after the death of his father, who did reign for three years, but was wounded when a woman “dropped an upper millstone” on his head. So Abimelech said to his armorbearer, “Draw your sword and kill me, lest men say of me, ‘A woman killed him.’ So his young man thrust him through, and he died” (Judg. 9:53, 54). King Saul was “severely wounded” by the Philistines, but did not want “uncircumcised men” to have the satisfaction of having slain him, so he “took a sword and fell on it,” thereby taking his own life (1 Sam. 31:1-4). Ahithophel, seeing that Absalom had not followed his advice, “put his house in order, and hanged himself, and died” (2 Sam. 17:23). Zimri killed Elah, king of Israel, and began to reign in his stead. He reigned seven days in Tirzah, when Omri, the commander of the army, besieged Tirzah, and “when Zimri saw that the city was taken, . . . he went into the citadel of the king’s house and burned the king’s house upon himself with fire, and he died” (1 Kings 16:8-18). Perhaps the classic case of suicide was Judas, who became filled with remorse after seeing that Jesus was sentenced to death, and “threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself” (Matt. 27:1-5). From these biblical examples of suicide, it is evident that suicide is not peculiar to our times.

## Why Do People Commit Suicide?

A common reply to this question is the statement that “they are insane.” No doubt some who commit suicide are insane, and are not responsible for their actions. Of course, God is the ultimate judge of a person’s account-



ability, for he “searches all hearts and understands all the intents of the thoughts” (1 Chron. 28:9). However, in the biblical cases of suicide which we have cited, insanity was not what drove those men to commit this act. Moreover, statistically speaking, we are told that “only 15 percent of those who take their lives have actually been diagnosed as being mentally ill” (*Steering the Straight* 95). Generally speaking, suicide victims were regarded as “normal” by parents and friends.

From different sources, contributing factors in teen suicide are: poor school performance, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, shame or guilt, the desire to manipulate or punish, tunnel vision or the inability to see beyond the pain and loneliness they feel at a given moment, and exposure to violence. Other “situational” or “warning signs of suicide risk” are said to include: suicide among friends, parental divorce, family violence or tension, family history of suicide, breakup with a girlfriend, listening to music that romanticizes suicide, moving or changing schools, personal health problems,” etc. Applying these “situational” signs to Charles Bishop, we do know that his parents were not living together, that they had moved at least nine times in his fifteen years, and that he had changed middle school four times before he began attending East Lake High as a freshmen in September.

But what is the “bottom line” of all the above “situational” factors that often lead to suicide among teens? These factors often lead to a poor self-image, a feeling of self-worthlessness, feeling unloved, undeserving, angry at the world, and basically alone in the world. Then factor into these “situational” experiences exposure to literally thousands of acts of violence on TV, living in a secular society which has largely de-throned God, and robbed youth of a concept of the hereafter, and what do you have? You have millions of troubled youth, many of whom commit suicide in an effort to find an immediate solution to a temporary problem. However, the immediate solution brings *permanent consequences!*

### The Sinfulness of Suicide

#### 1. First and foremost, it is murder — murder of self.

In every dispensation God has forbidden murder. In the Patriarchal Age God said, “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God He made man” (Gen. 9:6). In the Law of Moses God specifically said, “You shall not murder” (Exod. 20:13). In the New Testament “murderers” are listed as among those who “shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone” (Rev. 21:8).

**2. A Christian’s “body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.”** He has been “bought with a price,” and is therefore under obligation to “glorify” God in both his body and spirit (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). Hence, when a child of God commits

suicide he is desecrating the “temple of God”!

**3. Others are permanently affected.** According to Romans 14:7, “none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself.” We live in a world of people, and everybody affects somebody. Think of the grief borne by Charles Bishop’s mother, grandmother, his teachers, and classmates. Consider how the Flight School (its owner and personnel) is affected by the deliberate theft and crash of the plane. Think of the damage done to the bank building and the expense of the repairs. Does the need (?) to punish someone, or the desire to escape certain temporary problems, or the ambition to call attention to oneself by going out “in a blaze of glory,” justify causing such unresolvable grief and hardship to so many?

### Protection Against Suicide

**1. Provide a good family unit.** It has been shown time and again that “children’s depression and suicide risk are directly related to family problems.” Parents who scream, fight, commit marital infidelity, split up, and go their separate ways, contribute to the suicide risk of their own flesh and blood offspring. Those who are scripturally married should make every effort to work out their differences and *stay married!*

**2. Become a Christian!** Feelings of guilt contribute greatly to suicide risk. No one can successfully deny the fact that he has sinned (Rom. 3:23). But all sinners can be forgiven (Acts 2:38)! When one realizes that God has forgiven him, has adopted him into his family (Gal. 4:5), and that he is an heir of God and a joint-heir with Jesus (Rom. 8:17), he has every reason to “rejoice” (Phil. 4:4). No one, regardless of his this-world circumstances, has to be miserable. Happiness is not based upon what a person has, or his this-world situation; rather it is based upon what a person is and his next-world hope.

**3. Trust in God!** “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding” (Prov. 3:5). God is bigger than you! God is bigger than your problems! God is bigger than all your enemies, and “He cares for you” (1 Pet. 5:7).

**4. Pray!** “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). “. . . the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (Jas. 5:16). Yes, for the righteous, there is power in prayer!

**5. Be Faithful as a Christian!** If you “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” you will have all the necessities of life here (Matt. 6:33), and you will wear the crown of life hereafter (Rev. 2:10).

### Conclusion

— Every sane person, by putting God first (and all that that entails), can avoid the suffering of chronic depression that leads to

# So What's the Harm?

Richie Thetford

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So what's the harm when I do not attend the worship services of the church? First, it would do us all good to take a few moments and read Psalm 95. If we all possessed the attitude of David, then we would not even be asking this question. David loved the Lord and he loved coming to worship him at every opportunity — this is evident based upon his writings. We need to learn some valuable lessons from David, the man after God's own heart.

## How Is God To Be Worshiped?

Our God is to be worshiped in “spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). When we do so, then we will be reverencing him (Ps. 89:7), praising him (Ps. 107:32), and devoting our whole heart to his service (Ps. 111:1). When this is our focus in life, then our very lives will be pure (Isa. 1:10-13) because we have a desire to be perfect like him (Matt 5:48) and a genuine desire for spiritual growth in our life (Acts 11:26). David's attitude should be our attitude. We should want to worship God every time we get the opportunity to do so. But sadly, there are many, even within our own midst that don't take the time to worship the one who gave us life.

## The Absent Christian Is Harmed By Not Worshiping

When we can be at services to worship God and we choose not to be because of any one of 1,001 excuses that we have at our disposal, then we are doing ourselves great harm. Spiritual drifting does not occur when members of the Lord's body are actively seeking to serve him but rather when we stop serving him. The Hebrew writer penned: “Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him” (Heb. 2:1-3). (See also Heb. 10:36-39.) The more one misses the assembly, the harder the heart becomes. When one first misses, they may feel somewhat guilty but when it becomes habitual, the heart becomes hardened. Just because we *feel* alright about missing, doesn't make it right in the sight of God (Heb. 3:13-15). If we continue to miss the assembling of

ourselves together as commanded (Heb. 10:25), then we *will* be lost in sin (Jas. 4:17; Heb. 10:26-29). But we are not the only one whom we harm when we do not attend the worship services of the church.

## Other Christians Are Harmed When We Forsake Our Assembling Together

Many can be and often are influenced by what they see other “professed Christians” practicing. When Christians do not assemble (when they can), it may cause the weaker Christian or new convert to think that the assembling of ourselves together must not be all that important. Hebrews 10:23-25 says: “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” We certainly are not “holding fast the confession of our hope” when we willfully neglect the worship of God! We spend hours working with and teaching those of the world the importance of serving Christ, to accept him in baptism, and to remain faithful until death, only for them to see the awful, neglectful actions of those of our own membership who do not care enough to put Christ first and want to be at the assembly to worship him! Who is harmed? Both the forsaker and the new convert. How can we properly show others the importance of worshiping the Lord if we do not do so ourselves? The answer is, we can't, and many Christians will be held responsible on judgment day not only for their own sin but for the sin of being a stumbling block for others (Matt 18:7). When we are not at services and can be, then we cannot encourage others, others cannot be encouraged by us, and it sends a loud signal to *all* that the worship of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and God almighty is *not* a priority in our life.

## The World Is Harmed (and Helped) When We Forsake Worship Assemblies

When we forsake the assembling of the saints, we not only harm ourselves and other Christians but we also do another disservice. By maturing in our sin, our light to the

# “Go Up, You Baldhead!”

Jesse Flowers

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Two brief verses in the Book of Second Kings sends us all a strong, inspired reminder that God does not take lightly the disrespect or ridicule of the older by the younger. “Then he went up from there to Bethel; and as he was going up the road, some youths came from the city and mocked him, and said to him, ‘Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!’ So he turned around and looked at them, and pronounced a curse on them in the name of the Lord. And two female bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the youths” (2 Kings 2:23-24).

Though the text does not say, it seems reasonable to conclude that these youths knew exactly who they were mocking — Elisha, the prophet of God. He was the one whom the Lord himself had chosen to take the place of the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 19:16). Bethel, the city where this event took place, was the chief seat of the idolatrous calf-worship (1 Kings 12:26-29). Furthermore, do not forget that the family of wicked Ahab still ruled in Israel. The wretched woman Jezebel still pushed hard for the continuance of Baal worship. She had already massacred many of the prophets of the Lord. She had threatened and had every intention of killing Elijah. And so without question, to be a

*true* prophet of God such as Elisha, was not a very popular ministry to occupy in his day.

It is quite possible that what these youths meant in their mocking of Elisha, “Go up, you baldhead,” was for him to go join Elijah, his vanished master. The wicked inhabitants of Israel would gladly part with him as well. For these youths to carry on in such a way toward a prophet of God was more than likely taught to them by their ungodly parents. The mocking of God’s messengers was one of the sins Israel was charged with. “But they *mocked* the messengers of God, despised His words, and *scoffed* at His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy” (2 Chron. 36:16).

Elisha turned and looked at the faces of his assailants, and then pronounced a curse upon them. The curse that fell upon these youths was certain, because it was done in the name of the Lord. No doubt it met with the Lord’s approval, for immediately two female bears came forth from the woods and killed forty-two mockers of Elisha. God’s righteous indignation burned hot against those who fool-

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world has gone out (Matt. 5:14-16)! We can’t tell others about Christ if they do not see that Christ is important in our daily life. By making the choice of staying home instead of worshipping God, you have become a friend of the world and an enemy of God (Matt. 6:24; 1 John 2:15-17; Jas. 4:4). The worldly people are not blind and neither are the Christians who miss you when you are not present. By forsaking the assembly, we give the world one more opportunity to speak against Christianity. The apostle Paul wrote: “in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you” (Tit. 2:7-8).

## Conclusion

The preaching, teaching, and writing about the forsaking of the assemblies to Christians should not have to be. Each and every person who puts on Christ in baptism (Gal. 3:27) should be thrilled to serve him and zealous for good works (Tit. 2:14)! As we read this, we need to ask: “Is it I Lord? Is it I who has forsaken your assembly?” If the answer is “yes,” then repent and begin serving God in all sincerity and truth. Remember, life is short, but eternity is forever!

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# Agreeing to Work Together

(Placing Membership)

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Steve Wallace

The term “placing membership” has been the subject of some disagreement among brethren. We include it in the title merely as an eye-catcher to tweak the curiosity of readers with regards to the contents of this article. Am I trying to bind this terminology? Not at all! Rather, now that I have your attention, let us study the principle it involves.

Local churches are an important part of God’s plan. They are necessary if one is to properly worship God (John 4:24; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:17-34; 16:1-2). Also, the further spread of the gospel grows out of the establishment of local churches (Acts 13:1-3; Phil. 4:15-16; 1 Thess. 1:8). Further, a major provision in God’s plan for Christian growth is the local church (1 Cor. 14:26; Heb. 10:24-25).

How do local churches come into existence? We know that, often, they are established through the work of a preacher or preachers who labor in a given place (1 Cor. 3:5-11; Acts 17-19). Is this the only way they come into existence? Let us consider the case of Christians, who may not have been from Jerusalem, who were baptized there on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:9-11, 41). Upon arriving back in their hometowns or areas, what would these new Christians have to do to establish a church? Of course, there would have to be Christians in one’s area in order to have a plurality of saints (1 Cor. 1:2; Phil. 1:1). Also, these brethren would all have to come to *agreement* with regards to a number of things. In order for them to bring a local church into existence they would have to come to a

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ishly belittled his messengers. There is no other inspired story in all the Bible, to my knowledge, that compares to this one!

Perhaps the main message of this story is not that the young should respect their elders, but I do believe that is one of the key lessons to be applied. Under the Law of Moses, the children of Israel were commanded by God to honor those who were older. “You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the Lord” (Lev. 19:32). Honor for the aged has been an abiding principle throughout the pages of the Bible.

Good parents teach their children from a very young age that it is only right and proper to treat their elders with respect and honor. And good parents are quick to correct their young when any word or action takes place that exhibits dishonor. Of course, the kids of Christian parents should be quite familiar with the practice of showing honor toward those of years and authority because of the instruc-

tion received at home (Eph. 6:1-4).

It sickens me to see young people today who so readily mock and ridicule their elders. These sins will be answered for in the day of judgment (2 Cor. 5:10). Parents, have you been diligent to teach your children to respect those who are older? Brethren, how do we treat those older than us — with honor or dishonor? Even when a younger man must correct an older man it is to be done with respect. “Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father” (1 Tim. 5:1).

If you are one who could care less about treating your elders with respect and honor, you probably won’t be mauled by two female bears. No, your fate will be far worse (Rom. 1:30, 32). How many in that day will “have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone” (Rev. 21:8)? “Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders” (1 Pet. 5:5).

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common mind on such things as where to assemble (Heb. 10:25), time(s) on the first day of the week they would meet (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2), also with regards to if they would have assemblies on other days as well (Acts 2:46). Further, there would have to be accord on where to keep and what scriptural use they would make of collected funds (Acts 4:34; Phil. 4:15), how services would be carried out (order and who would do what, Acts 2:42), etc. If there was no agreement, there could be no church. *Agreement* is necessary for individual Christians to function as one in a local church.

Let us now consider this principle in places where churches already exist. The church where this writer preaches experiences a lot of turnover in its membership due to transfers of U.S. government personnel. A number of ready examples of the necessity of agreement present themselves. Here are some samples:

**1. One brother who lived five minutes from the church house only came on Sunday mornings.** He insisted that he be used in the services. After learning there was no good reason why he could not come to services on Sunday and Wednesday evenings, the members of the church did not *agree*. He was free to come to our services, but we decided we would not use him in the work and worship of this local church.

**2. Another sister who attended here told me up front, in a kind way, that she did not want to be a member of the church here.** She just wanted to attend while her husband was stationed in the area. She did not *agree* to work with this local church. She was not called on to teach a Bible class or in other ways function as the sisters in this church. We were in *agreement* for her to work with us. However, there was no *agreement* on her part.

**3. Still another brother, upon being asked if he wanted to be a member here, told me, "This is where I'm going to worship."** I assumed from this he was wanting to be a part of this church, and we used him in our services. A year or so later, when asked his opinion in a business meeting with regards to an erring brother who was in need of discipline, he replied, "I'm not a member of the church here." (He later explained how he did not believe in being a member of a church and how this had caused a major problem in a church he had previously attended in the U.S.) Aside from being aghast, other brethren here realized that the necessary *agreement* for us to work with him was not there.

**4. A number of institutional brethren have come to us over the years with very strong convictions with regards to institutional error.** I have been told how wrong we were for not participating in some error or errors of our digressive brethren. When I defended our stance on these

matters, most of these brethren left and went to the liberal church downtown. We did not come to *agreement* on the work of the church.

**5. A number of brethren have not been comfortable with the terms "place membership."** However, they *agreed* with us on the above Bible principles regarding the necessity of brethren agreeing to work together. Therefore, they were received as part of the church here.

### Conclusion

What can we learn from all this? First, local churches cannot exist without agreement. This needs to be remembered in our transient society as Christians relocate. Each local church has its own arrangements regarding its work and worship and is dependent on brethren acting as a team to successfully carry these things out. Brethren agreeing to function as a part of a given church will be an asset to any local group. Second, terminology is helpful only so much as it serves a useful purpose. If someone is not comfortable with "placing membership," what are they comfortable with? Can they identify with a local church they have been visiting? Can they say that they would like to be a part of that church? Can they say they would like to work and worship with it? Let us not quibble over terms. Rather, let us strive to come to an agreement to work together in the Lord's service. Agreeing to work together helps establish churches and aids in their functioning as one.

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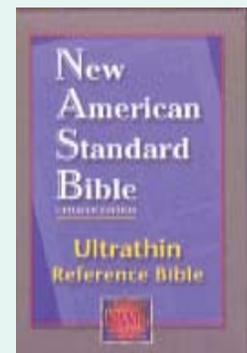
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# Weary Soldiers

Stan W. Adams

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All of God's children get tired of the battle at times. It is not easy to be always on alert and watching out for dangers on every hand. It would be much easier for all Christians to just "leave one another alone" and "go along to get along." I have never met a Christian who truly delighted in conflict. I heard of an elder recently, who said, "I am tired

of fussing, I just want to live the rest of my life among brethren without any conflicts." Isn't that a sad statement for any Christian to make, much less an elder? While most Christians can empathize with the sentiment, the fact is that this elder nor anyone else who calls himself a Christian, can let down his guard, put up his sword, rest on the sidelines of compromise until judgment day, and expect the Lord to say, "Well done good and faithful servant."

All true Christians must realize that the battle is never over when it comes to guarding the truth. Satan will do all he can to disrupt and weary the saints (1 Pet. 5:8). You can be certain he will not grow weary in his efforts to destroy the truth. All it takes for a congregation to be destroyed is for brethren to grow weary as soldiers and think they can go about and make "leagues and unions" with the enemy. That was Israel's fatal mistake when they entered into the land to possess it. God had told them to "utterly destroy the inhabitants, but after a while many grew weary of the battle and took the easy way by compromising with the enemy. This was man's way, not God's plan for victory over the heathen. All one needs to do is read the prophets to know what a tragedy it was for Israel to follow this course. The idea that evil can be embraced without destroying

the embracer is an old trick of Satan (1 Cor. 15:33; 2 Cor. 6:14-17; Matt. 6:24).

In 1 Corinthians 15:58, Paul says, "Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not." God recognizes the temptation we have to get tired and let up in our fight for right. That is why so much of the Bible is devoted to encouraging the righteous to keep fighting, no matter what the obstacles.

It is extremely hurtful when our own brethren turn on those who simply want to hold to the "old paths, wherein is the right way" (Jer. 6:16). However, it should not be surprising that the faithful are often in the minority. It has always been true. Remember the twelve spies who went into the land? How many came back with a positive report about taking the land? Only two! Remember the ten lepers who were healed? How many came back to say thank you? Only one! How many listened to the preaching of Noah? Only his family! How many today see the dangers that are drifting into the thought processes of brethren? As the prophets of old, many preachers and elders today are ignored by an elitist attitude of arrogant brethren who refuse to see where they are heading.

I have recently read two items that are among many that are alarming to me. One is an advertisement from a "conservative church" which is promoting a "Veggie Tales" adventure in their Vacation "Bible" School. The emphasis seems to be on "fun." Many brethren think "Veggie Tales" is a wonderful avenue for teaching the "Bible" to children. The approach on the videos approaches blasphemy. Instead of teaching children about David and Goliath, the approach is to teach about "Dave and the 8 Foot Pickle." Let me ask, where is the dignity and respect for the Scripture in this type of teaching? It is no wonder that many young people have little or no respect for the old, old story of Jesus! Are we to believe that the only way to reach our young people is to buy into these types of gimmicks? I deny that. Few parents and brethren know what their young people are capable of when it comes to Bible knowledge, simply because they have yet

to be challenged. I have always been taught that children will produce what is expected of them! If we “dumb down” our Bible teaching and change the word, we will not have a generation that honors God, but one that mocks him.

I wrote to the elders involved in this effort of “teaching” and have yet to receive a reply. Some brethren fail to sense any danger in these things and will likely continue on this course until they have departed the faith completely. On this journey to apostasy, they will continually justify themselves, no matter how conspicuous the danger. I well remember when the liberal brethren were having clowns and other sideshow events in their Bible class programs years ago. Look how far out they are now! How soon some forget! Should our approach to things like this be silence? Should we fold our hands and say nothing because no one will change? Absolutely not! We must remember what God said to Ezekiel in chapter 2:7: “And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, for they are most rebellious.”

The other item I read made reference to the Bible being written from a “flat-earth perspective.” The article, by a supposed conservative preacher, tells us that for the ancient people of the Bible to understand what God was saying, God had to reveal it to them from the “false-science” perspective of the time. Who said so? Has this brother become privy to some new revelation from God? I believe all truth agrees with all other truth. Truth in biblical mat-

ters is consistent with scientific and geological truths (not speculations). This modernistic approach to understanding the Bible, will be ignored as “harmless” by many brethren. But if this brother or anyone else denies the virgin-birth, then the alarm will sound with many! Does it have to get so drastic for brethren to see the dangerous thinking in this brother’s position? If part of the Bible is based on false premises, then how do we determine what constitutes truth? Again, I have written to this brother about similar teachings and still await a reply after almost a year.

Brethren, how did the Galatians leave the true gospel (Gal. 1:6)? Did it happen all at once? No, it was little by little. Just as a person gains weight a pound at a time, until one day he realizes he is grossly overweight and unhealthy, so it is with departure from truth. It is gradual, subtle and often undetected or ignored by even the most cautious. Brethren, we dare not grow weary in well-doing. It is time for all brethren to awake to the dangers. Do not wait for the enemy to knock on the gate before you sound the alarm. Soldiers of Christ must all stand as one armed for battle (Eph. 6:11-18).

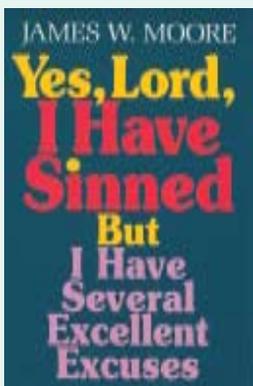
Don’t quit, stand firm!

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*From Sound Words, July 2004*

## Yes, Lord, I Sinned, BUT I Have Several Excellent Excuses

by James W. Moore



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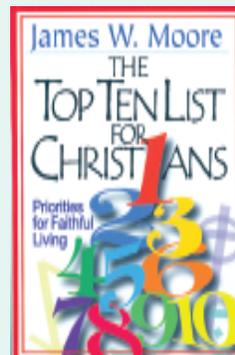
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## Paul's Personal Appearance

Larry Ray Hafley

It has been said that Paul was a man of short stature, bow-legged, and bald-headed, with eyebrows that met together. Whether that be true or not, his enemies said, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive, and his speech contemptible" (2 Cor. 10:10). Further, they said he was "unskilled in speech" (2 Cor. 11:6). Who can read the synopses of his speeches in Acts 13, 17, and 26, and believe that it was so? True, he did not speak "with the enticing words of man's wisdom," but who can study his orations and believe that his speech was "unskilled" and "contemptible"? Not me.

In secular history, an unkempt, raw-boned politician, who pronounced there as "thar" and who addressed the chairman of congressional committees as, "Mr. Cheerman," was once described thusly:

"The long, ungainly figure upon which hung clothes that, while new for this trip, were evidently the work of an unskilled tailor; the large feet and clumsy hands, of which at the outset, at least, the orator seemed to be unduly conscious; the long, gaunt head, capped by a shock of hair that seemed not to have been thoroughly brushed out, made a picture which did not fit in with New York's conception of a finished statesman" (See Lucas, *The Art of Public Speaking*, 34). His Secretary of War called him "the original gorilla." Others dismissed him as a "cunning clown" because of his penchant for clever, humorous stories. The "awkward and uncultivated" man was Abraham Lincoln, and the description of him was given when he delivered "a powerful message about the moral evils of slavery" at the Cooper Institute, February 27, 1860.

The comments above are not designed to sanction careless appearance or sloppy preaching. Though they be considered as "unlearned and ignorant," as were Peter and John, preachers should do their best in all things that "the ministry be not blamed." However, if an individual should lack, for whatever reason, the social skills and special graces of talented men, let us not refuse to give him a fair hearing (Mark 4:24; Luke 8:18).

After all, it was "the author and finisher of our faith" who had "no form nor comeliness," and of whom it was said that there was "no beauty that we should desire him." He was "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs . . . and we esteemed him not" (Isa. 53:2, 3). He who was rejected as being worthy of being a stone in the building of God was, after all, the chief cornerstone (Acts 4:11). Let us remember that the next time we are tempted to "tune out" a preacher who may not have the poise and polish of others.

## "Trivial Pursuits" continued from front page

and motivated to address the problem, man has turned to utterly "trivial pursuits." I heard of the ultimate expression of man's worldly, fleshly interests recently. I have seen two commercials advertising an Atkins-type diet food for overweight dogs! There must be a market for the products for two different companies are vying for this market. One person told me that he saw a commercial advertising a purifying devise for pet water trays. Man is so worldly and ungodly that most hardly realize how far we have fallen. People are not interested in salvation, but they are concerned about their overweight pets!

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## "Psalm 8" continued from page 2

The moon and the stars, which You have ordained,  
What is man that You are mindful of him,  
And the son of man that You visit him?  
For You have made him a little lower than the angels,  
And You have crowned him with glory and honor.  
You have made him to have dominion over the works of  
Your hands;  
You have put all things under his feet,  
All sheep and oxen —  
Even the beasts of the field,  
The birds of the air,  
And the fish of the sea  
That pass through the paths of the seas.  
O LORD, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all  
the earth!

After praising God for his work in creation (8:1, 3) and God's ability to rule the earth using the least powerful objects (8:2 — "out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have ordained strength"), the psalmist looks at man's place in God's creative scheme. He marvels at the position of dominion which God has given to man.

**A little inferior than the angels (8:5).** The text in Psalm 8 reads *elohim* for the word that is translated "angels" in the KJV. The word *elohim* is usually translated "God." The RSV translates the verse, "Yet thou hast made him little less than God, and dost crown him with glory and honor." Indeed, man's status is just a little less than God. The place of man is emphasized by the fact that God sent his Son to redeem *man*. Though angels have sinned (2 Pet. 2:4), there is no record of God acting to redeem them from their sins. But he did act to save mankind. The writer of Hebrews says, "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things

pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted” (2:16-18).

Man is made in the image of God. Moses records that God created man by forming his body from the dust of the earth and breathing into his nostrils the breath of life (Gen. 2:7). He wrote, “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:26-27).

Of all of God’s creation, only man is made in God’s image. The image of God is not man’s physical appearance because God is without a physical appearance; he is spirit (John 4:24). Hence, man’s likeness to God is his inner man — his soul or spirit. Man has free will; he is rational; he has emotion. But, most of all, he has a part of him that lives forever, even after this body has decayed in the earth. He has a spirit which separates and distinguishes him from all of the rest of God’s creation.

Those who treat mankind as just another animal see little difference in taking a human life and in taking an animal’s life. The abortion rights movement see the unborn baby as just a blob of flesh to be removed, like a wart or a mole. They certainly do not see the baby as a separate person made in the image of God. The bumper sticker says it correctly, “If it isn’t a baby, you aren’t pregnant.”

Those who advocate euthanasia have a lower view of man’s life. They see no difference in putting to sleep a dog when it is in pain and in putting to sleep an older person when he is in pain. If there were no difference between man and animal, there is no reason to oppose cannibalism. If we can kill and eat chickens and cows, why not man? Opposition to cannibalism and laws against murder presuppose that man is different from the animals.

**Crowned with glory and honor (8:5).** Because he is created in God’s image, man is crowned with glory and honor. We may not completely understand in what sense man is “crowned with glory and honor” until we reach our consummation in heaven.

**Man’s dominion over creation (8:6-8).** God made man to rule over all of his creation — over cattle, beasts of the field, birds, fish, and other sea creatures. Man’s dominion over nature is not by the chance working of evolution but by divine design. The created things are for man’s use and service; man is not for the service of the creatures.

Those social movements that treat mankind as wicked

should he kill animals for a coat, belt, or shoes are misguided. God himself slew an animal to provide coats for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:21). Man who imitates his God has not sinned. He should feel no guilt for wearing a leather belt, leather shoes, or leather coat. Nor should he feel guilt when he eats a hamburger or steak, a plate of shrimp, or a chicken leg. Following the flood, God spoke to Noah saying, “And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things” (Gen. 9:2-3). Though the Old Testament specified “clean” and “unclean” animals for Jewish people to eat, still mankind was expected to eat animals. Abraham dressed a calf to feed men (he was unaware that they were angels) who visited him in the plains of Mamre (Gen. 18:7). The animal rights movement is misguided because it does not teach man’s place of dominion over God’s creation.

Jesus expressed this same attitude toward man’s superiority over the animal creation when he argued that man is more valuable than animals. He said, “Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows” (Luke 12:7). Later he added, “Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?” (Luke 12:24). Man is of more value than any animal because he alone is made in the image of God.

### Conclusion

In observing the not so subtle changes occurring in American society toward human life, one sees the need to reaffirm the Judeo-Christian teaching about man’s place in God’s creation. The underpinning of morality is related to one’s concept of God and man; the two doctrines of theology and anthropology are intertwined. One cannot assault one without damaging the other. And, both of these concepts are related to ethics. Christian theology is a seamless garment. When one starts unraveling one part of it, he threatens the entirety of its doctrines.

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Nothing lies beyond the reach  
of prayer except that which lies  
beyond the will of God.

## Preachers Needed

**Hollywood, Florida:** The Harding Street Church of Christ is seeking a faithful preacher to work with them. Hollywood is located in South Florida near Fort Lauderdale and Miami which offers many opportunities. They are self-supporting with a building that is debt-free and they can supply 100% support. Attendance on Sundays mornings averages between 85-100 with approximately 50 members. The man sought must be sound in the faith, capable of reaching out to the lost with a love of people and personal work. It is essential the man who goes there is sound on the truth and willing to defend it. If you have an interest in being considered for this work, please contact Mac Maguire (954) 989-6820, Set McKinney (954) 499-2307, Mac McLeod (954) 437-3363 or George Richards (954) 658-5033.

## Quips & Quotes



### Study: Sex on TV Influences Youth

“Chicago — Children who watched a lot of TV with sexual content were about twice as likely to start having intercourse during the subsequent year as those with little exposure to televised sex, researchers found.

“High exposure to TV sex among those age 12 to 17 also was linked with a lower but still substantially increased likelihood of starting non-intercourse behavior, including passionate kissing and oral sex, the researchers found. Even shows that only refer to sex but don’t depict it had the effect, they found.

“TV thus ‘may create the illusion that sex is more central to daily life than it truly is and may promote sexual initiation as a result,’ the researchers said.

“The study appears in September’s *Pediatrics*, released today.

“The results are based on nationwide telephone surveys of 17,7902 adolescents queried in 2001 and again in 2002. Parental consent for participation was obtained before the interviews.

“The researchers devised a list of 23 popular shows that on average featured abundant sexual content. Programs the researchers considered high in sexual content included ‘That

’70s Show,’ ‘Friends’ and ‘Sex and the City’ — all popular with teens.

“Participants then were asked how often they watched those 23 shows. They also were asked whether they engaged in various sexual activities; results were compared from the two surveys.

“The number of teens who reported having had intercourse climbed from about 18 percent to 36 percent. The number who’d had sexual experiences other than intercourse climbed from 62 percent to 75 percent” (The Indianapolis Star [September 7, 2004], A3).

### Pope: Gay Unions Create “False Understanding”

“Vatican City — Pope John Paul II kept up his campaign against gay marriage Saturday, telling the ambassador from Canada — when some provinces allow same-sex couples to wed — that such unions create a ‘false understanding’ of marriage.

“The pope spoke Saturday to the new Canadian ambassador to the Holy See, Donald Smith.

“The institution of marriage necessarily entails the complementarity of husbands and wives who participate in God’s creative activity through the raising of children,’ said the pontiff, according to the text of the speech released by the Vatican, ‘Spouses thereby ensure the survival of society and culture, and rightly deserve specific and categorical legal recognition by the state’” (The Indianapolis Star [September 5, 2004], A15.

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### Religious Teens Less Sexually Active

"The National study of Youth and Religion researches the influence that religion and spirituality have on the lives of American adolescents.

"Funded by the Lilly Endowment, the study began in August 2001 and will continue at least through August 2005. Here are some of the findings shared so far by the project, based at the University of North Carolina.

"Adolescents involved in Religion typically have lower levels of sexual activity. Thirty-nine percent of unmarried teenage females who attended religious services reported having had sexual intercourse, compared with 65 percent of those who rarely attended religious services.

"Youth who never attend religious services have more than three times as many sexual partners as those who attend weekly.

"Parental influence is strong in shaping a youth's faith. Sixty-nine percent of students with two highly religious parents reported a strong personal faith themselves, compared with only 39 percent of students with only one devout parent.

"More than 84 percent of high school seniors who consider religion 'very important' have a positive self-attitude, compared with 73 percent of high school seniors who consider religion 'not important' to them.

"Nearly 74 percent of students who said religion was important to them participated in monthly public service, compared with only 25 percent of their non-religious peers.

"Blacks are more likely than whites to attend religious services regularly (49 percent vs. 29 percent) and vastly more likely to indicate that religion has high importance in their lives (55 percent vs. 24 percent).

"As parents' religious involvement rises, child delinquency generally falls. When parent and child differ about the importance of religion, the child will be 21-22 percent more delinquent than children who agree with their parents that religion is very important" (The Indianapolis Star [September 26, 2004], J4).

### Gay Marriage Roadblocks

"California's Supreme Court on August 12 voided the marriages of nearly 4,000 homosexual couples who wed in San Francisco last spring. The justices said that Mayor Gavin Newsom did not have the authority to flout state marriage laws.

"Ruling unanimously, the court said local officials may not ignore laws they disagree with. Justices sidestepped the larger question on the constitutionality of civil marriage rights for gay couples.

"State law and a voter-approved ballot initiative both define marriage in California as between a man and a woman.

". . . In a separate 502 vote, the court declared that the 4,000 marriage licenses issued between February 12, when Newsom issued the first certificate, and March 11, when the court ordered a halt, are 'void and of no legal effect.'

"Instead of helping his cause, Mayor Newsom has set back the same-sex marriage agenda and laid the foundation for the pro-marriage movement to once and for all win this battle to preserve traditional marriage,' said Mathew Staver of Liberty Counsel" (Christianity Today [October 2004], 19).

### LDS and DNA

"A new book casts doubts on the plausibility of a basic Book of Mormon claim, and it is polarizing members of the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"In Losing a Lost Tribe: Native Americans, DNA, and the Mormon Church (Signature Books), research scientist Simon G. Southerton of Canberra, Australia, notes that none of the nearly 7,500 DNA-tested Native Americans shows any link to ancient Israel. More than 99 percent show an Asian heritage. The Book of Mormon, however, says that Israelites emigrated to the Americas 2,600 years ago, with the now-extinct Lamanites and Nephites becoming the ancestors of American Indians" (Christianity Today [October 2004], 20).

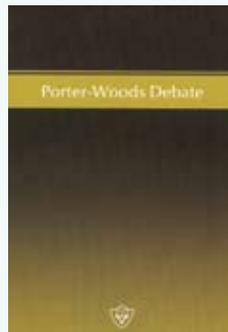
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## PORTER-WOODS DEBATE



This discussion is between two members of the church of Christ concerning church support of Orphan Homes and Homes for the Aged. This debate was held in Indianapolis, Indiana, January 3-6, 1956.

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## BOSWELL-HARDE- MAN DEBATE

This discussion covers the subject of Instrumental



Music in the Worship. It was conducted in the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, Tennessee from May 31 to June 5, 1923. The reader who is truly interested in the truth on scriptural worship will profit greatly from a study of this work. Is instrumental music in worship authorized by the Scriptures or is it just a matter of opinion?

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