

2005

**West Virginia Christian
Lectures**

October 9 - 12

Worthy

Is The Lamb

Pennsboro Church of Christ
205 East Penn Avenue
Pennsboro, WV 26415

THE LAMB'S PLAN OF SALVATION***"Worthy Is The Lamb!"***

Hear The Saving Gospel – Romans 1:16-17, 10:17

Believe That Jesus Is The Christ – John 8:24; Acts 8:37

Repent Of Sin – Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30; 2 Peter 3:9

Confess Jesus As Christ – Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10

Be Baptized (Immersed) Into Christ For The Remission Of Sins

Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:37-38; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Peter 3:20-21

Arise And Walk In Newness Of Life In Worship and Service

Romans 6:3-5; 1 John 1:7; Revelation 2:10

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September 6, 2005

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2005 Lectureship Schedule**Sunday, October 9**

9:30 AM	Jody Apple
10:30	Johnny Ramsey
7:00 PM	Jody Apple
8:00	Johnny Ramsey

Monday, October 10

1:00 PM	Slain Before The Foundation of the World	Albert Farley
	Ladies Class	Iris Ramsey
2:00	John The Baptist and the Lamb	Will Montgomery
3:00	The Lamb Who is a Lion	Frank Higginbotham
4:00	Without Blemish and Spot	D. Gene West
5:00	Dinner – Served by Pennsboro Ladies	
6:30	Singing	
7:00	The Theme of the Bible	Johnny Ramsey
8:00	The Suffering Servant	Jody Apple

Tuesday, October 11

1:00 PM	The Conversion of the Ethiopian	Eddie Melott
	Ladies Class	Iris Ramsey
2:00	The Blood of the Lamb	Terry Jones
3:00	The Lamb's Book of Life	Frank Higginbotham
4:00	The Lamb's Memorial	Phil Grear
5:00	Dinner – Served by Pennsboro Ladies	
6:30	Singing	
7:00	What Must I Do to be Saved by the Lamb?	Neal Pollard
8:00	Christ and the Church	Johnny Ramsey

Wednesday, October 12

1:00 PM	Because He Lives!	Charles Pugh III
	Ladies Class	Iris Ramsey
2:00	The Wrath of the Lamb	Dan Kessinger
3:00	Let the Redeemed Say So!	Frank Higginbotham
4:00	The Marriage Supper of the Lamb	W. Terry Varner
5:00	Dinner – Served by Pennsboro Ladies	
6:30	Singing	
7:00	The Lamb Who Leads to Living Fountains	Neal Pollard
8:00	Christ and the Church	Johnny Ramsey

Director's Statement

From eternity, God's plan for saving sinful man would require a sacrifice that only heaven could provide and that only the Son of God could fulfill. Long before the fact, Isaiah prophetically described Christ by saying, "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth" (Is. 53:7). The scriptures provide many figurative descriptions of the Christ, but none more vivid or heart-rending than His being portrayed as the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8).

In Revelation 5:12 we read this bold exclamation, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain ..." Considering the profound impact of that declaration upon heaven and earth, as well as time and eternity, it is nigh unto impossible to imagine a more sublime theme for this lectureship than, "*Worthy Is The Lamb!*" With nothing but the eternal horrors of a devil's hell in store for us, how humbling it is that the God of heaven intervened and provided the ransom for our sin by offering His only begotten Son (Jn. 3:16).

The Pennsboro church is both honored and humbled by the privilege of hosting what promises to be a spiritual feast of the grandest order. We have invited thirteen gospel preachers, of whom we have the highest confidence, to deliver twenty-two lessons on this wonderful theme. Each of these men is widely known and wonderfully appreciated for his doctrinal soundness, defense of the scriptures, and devotion to the Savior. Additionally, sister Iris Ramsey has graciously agreed to teach a ladies' class each afternoon. Our deepest appreciation is expressed to all of these precious people for their presence and proclamation of heaven's message.

We are thankful to be able to produce this book containing written manuscripts of the lectures that will be delivered during the 2005 West Virginia Christian Lectureship. We are very grateful for brother Albert Farley and his good wife, Nancy, for their countless hours of editing manuscripts and printing the book. Without their labors this book would not likely be in existence.

Great lectureships are the direct result of a tremendous amount of hard work. The beloved brethren that make up the Lord's family in Pennsboro are to be commended for their commitment to host this lectureship and their determination to give their best effort toward its success. A special word of thanks is in order for our good elders who continue to lead by godly example. Nothing of this magnitude can be accomplished without every member doing his part.

"*Worthy is the Lamb ... to receive ... honor and glory and blessing*" (Rev. 5:12). It is to that end that we commend this volume to you, along with all of the loving labors that have gone into the Sixth Annual West Virginia Christian Lectureship.

Terry G. Jones
Lectureship Director

Preface

We offer the 2005 West Virginia Christian Lectureship Book with a prayer that it is accurate in content and that it will be useful to all who read it.

The elders of the Pennsboro church of Christ are to be commended for their love and care in hosting the lectures again. We are thankful to all members of the congregation for every part they have played in making this another very successful effort for the cause of Christ.

We commend Terry Jones for his able direction of the lectures. He and the Pennsboro elders selected the theme, subjects, speakers, and schedule of the lectures.

We thank Terry for contacting all of the speakers and for making arrangements for them to send in the manuscripts for this book.

There is a change in the location of the biographies in this book. Each biography is located at the end of each speaker's first or only article.

This is our sixth lectureship book:

1. Mannington church of Christ: "Thus Saith The Lord" (2000)
2. Martinsburg church of Christ: "A Plea For The Fundamentals" (2001)
3. Martinsburg church of Christ: "Give Me The Bible" (2002)
4. Pennsboro church of Christ: "Christianity: The Hope of the World" (2003)
5. Pumpkin Center church of Christ: "Great People of the Bible" (2004)
6. Pennsboro church of Christ: "Worthy Is The Lamb!" (2005)

Copies of this book will be provided free of charge to all families who attend the lectures.

Finally, I want to express my indebtedness to brother Lester Headley, of the Salem congregation, who assisted me in the printing of this book, and to my wife, Nancy, who, once again, proofread each article in the book for grammatical purposes.

- Albert E. Farley, editor

A CHRISTIAN IS . . .

Johnny Ramsey

A Person with a Purpose

He, because of a glorious relationship that transcends earthly ties, lives for Jesus every moment (Philippians 1:21). Christ is the light of his days upon this globe (Psalms 27:1). Whatever the Christian does is in the name of the Lord (Colossians 3:17) and for heaven's glory (I Corinthians 10:31). Such a one lives to bring forth fruit in God's vineyard (Romans 7:4). Striving for the mind of Christ the cross becomes the center of the Christian's affection and the motivating factor in his life (Galatians 6:14). Knowing that the Savior is more powerful than the Devil (I John 4:4) bolsters our faith and provides incentive for us to press on to higher ground (John 15:8). Every new day is a divine romance and an exciting adventure as we walk hand in hand with Jesus.

"Beautiful life with such a friend
Beautiful life that has no end
Eternal life, eternal joy — He's my friend."

We are complete and entirely sustained in Christ, and it is a joy to follow His sinless steps and deepen in those things that glorify God (II Kings 19:30). Christians realize that our purpose is to magnify the Savior in all that we do (Philippians 1:20).

"When I reach the crystal sea
Voices will call, voices will call,
But my Savior's voice will be Sweeter than all, sweeter than all."

A Person with Peace

Though trials and heartaches may enter the Christian's life they do not dominate the scene due to an inner calmness the Lord provides to faithful soldiers under His command (I Timothy 2:2). We are promised that the Captain of our salvation will never forsake us (Hebrews 2:10; 13:6). The problems of a frenetic world do not impress or distress those who are just passing through to a better realm (Hebrews 11:10-16). We will try to make this world a better place, but we will not get bogged down with such mundane trivia (I Peter 2:9-11).

"This world is not my home
I'm just a passing through
My treasures are laid up

Somewhere beyond the blue . . ."

As we survey the sad scene about us in a corrupt society, we weep over sin but rejoice in the hope of the gospel that sustains us (Romans 15:13). We hold to God's unchanging hand and count our blessings as our hearts fill with compassion for the billions who are lost and do not even know it!

"Rescue the perishing
Care for the dying
Snatch them in pity
From sin and the grave . . ."

In the midst of evil and shame, we can soar on eagles' wings (Isaiah 40:31) to reign in life with the victorious Redeemer (Romans 5:17). Peace passing understanding is our treasure as we rejoice in the unfathomed, incomparable love of God (Romans 11:33-36).

A Person with a Past

Gratefully, the Christian acknowledges, however, that the sins of the past have been washed away in the blood of the Lamb (John 1:29). He may have been steeped in error, overwhelmed in iniquity, headed for hell, and useless to his Maker. But, praise God, *now* he is a new creation (Galatians 6:15) with a vibrant hope and a rich destiny in realms divine and eternal. That tremendously heavy load of guilt is no longer hovering over his name, and a place in the Lamb's book of life is reserved for that one who once was in the pig-pen of carnality and rebellion. That fountain for cleansing Zechariah foretold contained precious hope for him, and the infinite love of God showered blessings untold upon him to release him from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:1-2). The superb promise of the new covenant still rings in the Christian's ears:

"Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

Repentance, developed by godly sorrow on our part and the goodness of God as heaven's part (Romans 2:4; II Corinthians 7:10) combined for a wonderful success story. Christ was delivered for our offenses and raised for our justification (Romans 4:25).

"I am redeemed, by grace divine
Glory, glory, hallelujah
Christ is mine; Christ is mine!"

Once racked by sin and guilt the Christian now reflects upon that deliverance from the pit of hell and rejoices that the wickedness of the past is gone and all things are new (Romans 6:11).

A Person with a Passion

Paul, on board a ship, with 275 others, boldly told them that he believed God and that they had better pay attention to divine mandates (Acts 27:25). So deep was his passion for things divine, that great apostle brilliantly stated to the Corinthians:

“I have believed, therefore I have spoken.”

When Christians survey the world about them, the emotion of pity for a sin oriented society produces an empathy for the lost that becomes compassion for their souls. No verse is better on this point than II Corinthians 4:3 . . .

“If our gospel be hid, it is hidden to those who are lost.”

Christians have a passion for Truth (John 8:32). There will never be a substitute for it just as there will never be another Savior (Jude 3; II Cor. 5:14). We should always maintain a passion for purity (Matthew 5:8) and integrity (Titus 2:12). We must passionately worship God in the beauty of holiness (I Chron. 29:10-13). Children of the heavenly Father should always have a passion for heaven and press fervently toward that goal. James Metcalf wrote these wonderful words:

“The more I think about it now
The more it seems to me
That life is but a stepping stone
To God’s eternity.”

In "the sweet by and by" we will have forever and a day to thank the Lord for the rich provisions of the gospel that propelled us to higher ground. Is it not grand to be a Christian?

- 627 Rodeo Drive
Mt. Vernon, TX 75457

Biography

Johnny Ramsey has been preaching the gospel for over 50 years. He was born and raised in Sherman, Texas. He has held over 1,000 gospel meetings and is a prolific writer of books, tracts, and articles in brotherhood papers.

LEAD ME TO CALVARY

Johnny Ramsey

When our blessed Lord was crucified at Golgotha epochal events took place. Sin was overwhelmed by His purity, Satan was defeated by His power and heaven became a possibility for us. The magnificent glory of God shone that day as never before. Glad tidings of redemption pealed forth on that tremendous occasion. Jude, verse 25, belongs in this setting:

To God our Savior, who alone is wise,
be glory and majesty, dominion and power,
both now and forever. Amen

Evil had been running rampant, and the lost souls of humanity had looked in vain for hope and cleansing until the Messiah came, lived perfectly, and died vicariously to redeem us from the power of sin and death!

For the Son of man is come
to seek and to save
that which was lost. Luke 19:10

That fountain of efficacy that Zechariah 13:1 had promised now flowed from the gentle side of Jesus to grant mankind peace with the Creator.

For God so loved the world that He gave
His only begotten Son,
that whoever believes in Him
should not perish
but have everlasting life. John 3:16

The new and living way, through the veil of His flesh (Hebrews 10:19-20) had been opened to bring joy to shameful folk who had been on the road to hell.

Buried with him in baptism, wherein
also ye are risen with him through the
faith of the operation of God, who hath
raised him from the dead. Colossians 2:12

Prophecy and fulfillment meshed at the cross, and demons trembled at the sound of victory for the saints. Christ had entered the strong man's house and the Devil knew a stronger One than he was now the winner (Mark 3:27).

Most of the greatest songs we sing center around Calvary and the incomparable love of God (II Corinthians 9:15). W. J. Kirkpatrick helped us to focus with these words of a gospel hymn:

Lest I forget Gethsemane
Lest I forget Thine agony
Lest I forget Thy love for me
Lead me to Calvary.

Paul gloried in the Cross and so should we (Galatians 6:14). Preaching the crucified Savior was the heart of apostolic proclamation (I Corinthians 2:1-5). The urgency of calling sinners back to Golgotha was the heart of Christianity (Philippians 3:10-12).

Into the cross of Jesus
Deeper and deeper I go
Following through the garden
Facing the dreaded foe
Drinking the cup of sorrow
Sobbing with broken heart
"O Savior help, dear Savior help!
Grace for my weakness impart."

He laid down His life to give us hope of eternal bliss as Calvary opened the way to heaven. Indeed, the way of the Cross leads home! What matchless grace.

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JESUS CHRIST: THE LAMB OF GOD SLAIN FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD

Albert E. Farley

Our Lord Jesus Christ is presented by many figures in the Bible. He is the Door of the Sheep; the Rock of Ages; the Bread of Life; the Light of the World; the Good Shepherd; the Way, the Truth, and the Life; the Sower; *etc.* One of the most precious is "The Lamb of God." I appreciate the theme of this lectureship and the privilege of speaking on this assigned subject, "Jesus Christ: The Lamb Slain from the Foundation of the World."

An Eternal Plan

We are creatures of time. There was a time for us to be born; there is a time for us to live; there will be a time for us to die. Ecclesiastes 3. God is not subject to time. He has always existed; He will always exist. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." Psalm 90:2. In 2 Peter 3:8, Peter wrote, "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

The Bible account of creation is the divine account of the beginning of time. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Genesis 1:1. God created the world and all things therein. We read of the account of the beginning of man in the first book of the Bible; but, the beginning of man was not the beginning of God's love for man!

The story of Jesus Christ is the greatest love story ever told. It is a story that began in eternity – before Adam and Eve were created in the beginning! The Love of God is what the history of the world is all about. Everything that has ever happened between God and His creation has happened for and because of God's love for mankind.

The story of the Bible is this: God's love for us is from eternity. That is, God loved us from the foundation of the world. God loved us before we were born. When Jesus died upon the cross at Calvary, He died according to a Master Plan that was laid down from the foundation of the world.

Our text is Revelation 13:8. Here, John wrote, "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." The divine plan to send Jesus into the world was so thorough and so certain that the scriptures state, emphatically, that Jesus was slain from the foundation of the world.

The American Standard Version translates Revelation 13:8 differently. It states, "And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, every one whose name hath not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain." The reference here is upon the names not written in the book from the foundation of the world and not upon Jesus slain from the foundation of the world.

The birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus occurred at exactly the right times – and in exactly the right places. Notice what the scriptures teach about the mission of Jesus Christ into the world. It was truly a mission of eternal love.

He Taught Things That Had Been Kept Secret from the Foundation of the World

In Matthew 13:35, the Bible says, "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; *I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.*"

- Jesus spoke of a sacrifice that was, to the Greeks, foolish; and, to the Jews, a stumbling block!
- He spoke of a second birth to a ruler of the Jews, and he marveled! John 3:3, 5
- He spoke of a kingdom/church that was not of this world – kingdom that was within us! Matthew 4:17
- He spoke of a love that would bless and do good to our enemies and that would heap coals of fire upon their heads!
- He spoke of a way of life in which it was more blessed to give than to receive – a lifestyle that would turn the world upside down! Matthew 5:1-12
- He spoke of a peace that passed all understanding; a joy that was unspeakable; and a hope that entered into the heart of heaven itself!

These are the things of which Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:1-10.

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. 3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. 4 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: 5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. 6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are

perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: 7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: 8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 10 *But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.*

This is a fulfillment of Isaiah 64:4. "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him."

The reaction of the people was astonishment. "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: 29 For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." Matthew 7:28-29. "The officers answered, Never man spake like this man." John 7:46. "And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" Luke 24:32.

Yes, when Jesus came into the world, He taught things that had been kept hidden from the foundation of the world! His truths were new to the world, but they were as old as eternity!

The Eternal Kingdom Was Prepared for the Saved from the Foundation of the World

When Jesus spoke of the eternal kingdom in Matthew 25:34, He said, "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom *prepared for you from the foundation of the world:*" Jesus clearly said that the kingdom was prepared from the foundation of the world. Yet, he also said, in John 14:1-4, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. *I go to prepare a place for you.* 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. 4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." This, like his death upon the cross, was sealed and determined before the foundation of the world! After his death upon the cross, Jesus did go and prepare a place for us, but the sureness of it was so certain it was spoken of as having been done from the foundation of the world! This news was new to the world, but, in truth of fact, it was as old as eternity!

The kingdom of Christ on earth and the eternal kingdom in heaven are unique of all other kingdoms that have ever been or ever will be! "For we which

have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished *from the foundation of the world.*" Hebrews 4:3. In 2 Peter 1:10-11, Peter said, "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: 11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the *everlasting kingdom* of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

The Blood of the Prophets Was Shed from the Foundation of the World

God knew – before He ever made Adam and Eve – that many of His faithful prophets would be slain by those whom He wanted to save in Jesus Christ! There was no other way for it to be. In Luke 11:50-51, Jesus said, "That the blood of all the prophets, which was *shed from the foundation of the world*, may be required of this generation. From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation."

This, I think, is similar to our President and our Congress when, in 1941, they declared that a state of war existed between the United States and Japan and Germany. They knew – before they did so – that many of the boys would not be coming home alive. They did not know which boy would die – but they knew that many would. In a sense, their blood was shed before the ink was dried!

Unlike man, however, God knew not only which prophets but also when and how each prophet would die! Did God not know that Cain would slay his righteous brother? Did God not know that Isaiah and Jeremiah would be slain and their blood would be shed? Did God not know that John the Baptist would be beheaded by a wicked Herod? Yes, God knew. Why, then, did He send them? Because it was necessary for Him to carry out His eternal plan of love – a plan that was determined from the foundation of the world to save a lost and wicked world from sin.

The Father Loved the Son Before the Foundation of the World

Our Lord prayed earnestly for the salvation of His disciples – those whom the Father had given to Him. He prayed, in John 17:24, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

Why did He thus pray? He loved them with the same love His father had for Him from the foundation of the world.

The Saved in Christ Were Chosen Before the Foundation of the World

God's eternal plan of salvation was designed and developed according to the good pleasure of His will! In Ephesians 1:4-5, Paul wrote, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."

God could have developed any plan of salvation or scheme of redemption He so desired – according to the eternal nature of His holiness, righteousness, goodness, and mercy. He chose to save the world in His only begotten Son. He predestinated that all who would believe in, trust in, submit to, obey, and live holy and blameless lives in Christ Jesus, and who walked in love would be saved! There is no other way.

This is the one way of salvation. "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." John 14:6. In Acts 4:12, Peter said, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Our Lord had said, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. 5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." John 15:4-5

There is NO hope in any other person or in any other faith or in any other religion on earth.

- We cannot be saved in Judaism.
- We cannot be saved in Buddhism.
- We cannot be saved in Islam or Muhammadism.
- We cannot be saved in Hinduism.
- We cannot be saved in Zoroastrianism.
- We cannot be saved in ancient Mesopotamian or Egyptian Mythologies.
- We cannot be saved in Greek and Roman Mythologies.
- We cannot be saved in the indigenous faiths of ancient African natives or of the native American Indians.
- We cannot be saved in Jainism, Sikhism, Taoism, or Confucianism.
- We cannot be saved in the "New World" religions of the Church of Scientology or the Unification Church.
- We cannot be saved in Catholic or Protestant denominationalism.

We can only be saved "in Him" – in Christ. The eternal plan of salvation in Christ was first proclaimed in its fullness by Peter and the other apostles on

the first day of Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The revealed terms of salvation are recorded in Acts, chapter 2:37-41:

37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? 38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. 39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. 40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. 41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

In Acts 2:47, the Bible concludes, "Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

**Christ, the Lamb Without Blemish, Was Foreordained
Before the Foundation of the World
but Was Manifest in These Last Times for Us**

The apostle Peter wrote, 1 Peter 1:18-20, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers. But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot Who verily was *foreordained before the foundation of the world*, but was manifest in these last times for you.

Truly, God's plan to send Jesus into the world was from eternity. The question was not "Who?" The question was not even, "When?" In Galatians 4:4, Paul wrote, "*But when the fulness of the time was come*, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." Thus, the words and the thought expressed in the song, entitled, "What A Savior" are not true. The writer of the song wrote,

"Once I was straying in sins' dark valley, No hope within could I see;
They searched thru heaven and found a Savior To save a poor lost soul
like me."

No, friends, "they" (God, the Holy Ghost, and the angels?) did not have to look through heaven to find a Savior; He was already chosen!

The plan was from eternity and was revealed in a step-by-step process, culminating in the death of Jesus upon the cross, according to the plan of God. "Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the

holy place every year with blood of others; 26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Hebrews 9:25-26.

The Slain Lamb Is Now Alive!

John was privileged to look into heaven for a little space of time. "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." Revelation 5:6

John saw a Lamb. This Lamb had been slain. Now, however, it stood; it was no longer dead! It had seven horns. Horns are a symbol of power and strength. "Seven" is the symbol of completeness or perfection. It had seven eyes. He sees and knows all things.

Conclusion

Yes, the story of Jesus Christ is the story of God's eternal love for you and me. God's plan of salvation for us is as old as eternity. It is NOT true that "they searched through heaven" to find us a savior. God's plan was from the very foundations of the world.

The work of Jesus Christ was determined from the foundation of the world:

- The truths He taught were from the foundation of the world.
- The kingdom was prepared for the saved from the foundation of the world.
- The blood of the prophets was shed from the foundation of the world.
- The Father's love for His Son was from the foundation of the world.
- The saved in Christ were chosen before the foundation of the world.
- The sacrifice of Christ upon the cross was foreordained before the foundation of the world.
- The slain Lamb is now alive – forever more!

How have you responded to this eternal love? It would be the height of ungratefulness and meanness for children to turn their backs upon the love and sacrifices of their parents. It would be even worse for any persons alive today to reject and to turn their backs to the eternal love and sacrifices that God has made to save us from the consequences of our sins.

God's love for us is from eternity. Someday, this love will be withdrawn from those who will reject it. Just as God's love for us is from eternity, a place of

eternal punishment has also been prepared for all who reject His love. When Adam and Eve sinned, God revealed His eternal plan for Satan. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Genesis 3:15.

If man will reject Jesus Christ, the gift of His eternal love, he, too, will be rejected in the final day of judgment. Jesus said, "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:" Matthew 25:41.

We pray you will respond to God's love with faithful obedience and service. Believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Repent of all of your sins. Confess your faith in Christ. Be buried with Christ in baptism for the remission of your sins. Be faithful in worship and service all the days of your life. Receive the crown of life that has been laid up for you in heaven.

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Biography

Albert Farley was born at Crum, West Virginia, April 26, 1942, the son of William H. and Clista Spaulding Farley and was raised at Longacre, WV. He is a graduate of Montgomery High School (1960) and served four years in the U.S. Navy. He attended Ohio Valley College (1964-66), where he met and married Nancy Ann Brewer. They have four children: Scott, Clista (Heintzman), Rebecca (Ragle), and Elisabeth (Taylor); and four grandchildren: Bethany and Darren Heintzman and Aaron and Andrew Ragle.

Albert preached his first sermon (1964) at Red Bush, OH. He began full-time preaching in 1966 at Belington, WV. He has also worked with WV congregations at Chesapeake, Weston, Crum, Webster Springs, and Salem, where he has lived since 1982.

He is a graduate of Glenville State College (BA in Elementary Education) and taught the fifth grade at Crum Elementary School. He completed ten hours of graduate work with the Alabama School of Religion. He spoke five days each week on the "Gospel Minutes" radio program on WHAW, Weston (1972-76). He spoke on the local cable television station at Webster Springs, WV (1976-80) and on the "Bible Study Program," on WHAW (1980-82).

JOHN THE BAPTIST AND THE LAMB OF GOD

Will Montgomery

“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29)

Who was John the Baptist? Luke tells of his parents:

“There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife *was* of the daughters of Aaron, and her name *was* Elisabeth.” (Luke 1:5).

He further tells of their character.

“And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.” (Lu 1:6).

And, again, Luke informs us about the plan that God had for John.

“And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were *now* well stricken in years. And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest’s office before God in the order of his course, According to the custom of the priest’s office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw *him*, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” (Lu 1:7-17).

There are many similarities in the births of John and Jesus. Both conceptions were miraculous. Elisabeth was barren and beyond the age of child-bearing, and Mary was a virgin. Both births were announced by an

angel, and both women found favor in the sight of God. Their parents were told what their names were to be by the angel. John and Jesus were cousins according to Luke 1:36:

“And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.”

After Mary received the announcement from the angel concerning her and Elisabeth’s babies, she went to see Elisabeth. Through the Holy Spirit an acknowledgment of Mary and her unborn son was made both by Elisabeth and the babe in her womb. The acknowledgement was to Mary that she had been chosen to be the mother of the Son of God and to the baby that he was the son of God.

“And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed *art* thou among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of thy womb. And whence *is* this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.” (Lu 1:39-44).

The next account of John the Baptist is found in Matthew 3. He was fulfilling the mission that the angel of God told Zacharias that he was to carry out, that of preparing the way for Jesus. Let’s look at Matthew’s account:

“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel’s hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.” (Mt 3:1-10).

John was preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, and he was preaching repentance for the kingdom of heaven was at hand. He was the voice of one crying in the wilderness. He and he alone was the one to herald the coming of the Messiah. He was to prepare the way for Him to come. The people had to be shown that they needed to get ready for this great event. He was to clear the paths by helping the people to get their hearts ready to receive the message of repentance and remission of sins that Jesus was to bring. They had to be ready not only to hear the message but also to obey it.

John's preaching was effective. Matt 3:5 tells us:

"Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan," (Mt 3:5).

The people not only listened to his message, but they also responded to it by being baptized. (Matt 3:6)

John's preaching was also forceful and without reservation. He called the Sadducees and Pharisees a generation of vipers. He did not back down. He called for them to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. In other words, he got down to the nitty-gritty. He called sin sin and hit them where they lived. The Pharisees and Sadducees in Matt 3:9 tried to claim that because they were descendants of Abraham they could reject the Messiah and His kingdom, but in verse 10 John let them know that they had sealed their own fate by not accepting the Christ.

"And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." (Mt 3:10).

In Matthew 3:11 John proclaimed the power, might, and deity of the one who was yet to come.

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire:" (Mt 3:11).

John was baptizing unto repentance, but the one to come after him would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. The one to come was mightier than John, and John recognized that he was not worthy to carry His sandals. John knew what his mission was, as Christ knew His mission. John also realized that his work was only temporary. He said he must decrease, but Christ was to increase. (John 3:30)

The reference to Holy Spirit and fire baptism simply means that Christ would baptize the apostles in the Holy Spirit so that they could carry out their

work of preaching, performing miracles and confirming the word. John 16:13, Mark 16:20, Heb 2:3-4. The baptism of fire is a reference to the punishment of the wicked. Matthew 3:12 alludes to Christ's having the ability to separate the righteous from the unrighteous.

“Whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” (Mt 3:12).

In the harvesting of wheat, the wheat and chaff were tossed together into the air so that the wind blew the chaff away and the grain fell into the garner and the chaff was burned.

Matthew 25:32-33 gives us the picture of this separation, which will take place on judgment day.

“And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.” (Mt 25:32-33).

John held nothing back in his preaching and preparing the way for the “Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.”

As John was carrying out his mission and preaching about Christ, Christ came to him.

“Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?” (Mt 3:13-14).

John acknowledged his inferiority to Christ and asked Jesus why he would come to him to be baptized. He felt that Christ should baptize him. John knew that he had been baptizing those who needed to repent, those who had sinned. In verse 15 Jesus explained why it was necessary for him to be baptized of John.

“And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer *it to be* so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.” (Mt 3:15).

After Jesus' baptism, the Father demonstrated His love and approval of His Son.

“And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from

heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Mt 3:16-17).

Now let us turn our attention to the text, which is found in John chapter 1. In John 1:19 the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask John, “Who are you?” In verse 20 John said, “I am not the Christ.” In verse 21 they asked if he was Elijah, He said, I am not.” Again, they asked, “Are you the prophet?” They were referring to the prophet that Moses spoke about in Deuteronomy 18:15. He answered no. Then, in verse 22, “Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?” (John 1:22). John then began to explain who he was, what his mission was, and who was coming after him.

“He said, I *am* the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe’s latchet I am not worthy to unloose.” (John 1:23-27).

We come to the heart of the matter in verse 29.

“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29).

The following verses all refer to Jesus as the Lamb of God. (Acts 8:32; I Peter 1:19; Rev. 7:1). Christ is the sacrificial lamb described in the Old Testament. (I John 2:2).

“And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins* of the whole world.” (1Jo 2:2).

Christ is the satisfaction for our sins.

In John 3:29 John spoke of himself and his relationship with Christ. He said that Christ is the bridegroom and that he, John, is the friend of the groom. We would say he was the best man. Just as John, in this analogy, was not the groom, neither is he the head of the church.

Christ spoke highly of John in Matthew 11:11 when he made the statement that there is none born of women greater than John, but the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John. This may seem to be a contradiction, but John did not live to be in the kingdom; he died before its

establishment. Therefore, one who has been added to the church is greater than John.

The magnitude of John's statement about Christ in John 1:29 deserves attention. He said, "Behold the lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." How does He take away the sin of the world? Only when we become obedient and do what the Bible tells us to do to be saved. We must preach Acts 2:38. We must preach Acts 22:16. Our message needs to be as plain and forceful as John's was. The great commission demands that we preach Christ. (Mark 16:15-16; Matt 28:18-20). The sin of the world demands that we preach about the Lamb of God. All have sinned and fallen short. (Romans 3:23). The wages of sin is death. (Romans 6:23). Sin is a transgression of God's law. (I John 4:3). Men become slaves to sin. (John 8:34). We have no hope without the blood of the Lamb of God. Our souls and the souls of our children and grandchildren are at stake.

The moral decay of our nation and the world demands that we preach the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. We must preach against the terrible things that are being done. "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." (Pr 14:34). The divorce rate is almost 50%. Just think! That means that 1 out of every 2 marriages ends in divorce. Divorce isn't just between a husband and a wife. Countless numbers of children are scarred for life because of this sin. Even though divorce for any cause is accepted in today's society, Matthew 19:9 still reads the same as it did in the first century.

"And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except *it be* for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." (Mt 19:9).

Homosexuality is rampant in our nation. It is on almost every TV program. It is touted as an alternate lifestyle. Laws are being passed to allow same-sex marriages. Some denominations are accepting homosexuals as priests, preachers, teachers, and some are allowing their preachers to perform marriages for same-sex couples. I'm afraid that I would have to go to jail if faced with the choice of marrying or not marrying a homosexual couple. Romans 1:24-28 tells us how God feels about this sin.

"Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and

receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;" (Rom 1:24-28).

In His great wisdom God has already dealt with the problem of same-sex marriages. Note the following verses:

"So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; *male* and *female* created he them." (Gen 1:27)

"Therefore shall a *man* leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his *wife*: and they shall be one flesh. (Gen 2:24)

"And said, For this cause shall a *man* leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his *wife*: and they twain shall be one flesh?" (Mt 19:5)

"For this cause shall a *man* leave his father and mother, and cleave to his *wife*;" (Mark 10:7)

"For this cause shall a *man* leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his *wife*, and they two shall be one flesh." (Eph 5:31)

Another sin that has been brought to the forefront recently is euthanasia: the taking of a life just because some one has decided that a person is no longer of value to society. God, again, in his infinite wisdom has addressed this issue also:

"A nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor shew favour to the young;" (De 28:50)

"Thou shalt not kill." (Ex 20:13)

"Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not;" (Jer 7:9)

"For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if *there be* any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Romans 13:9)

Jack Kevorkian, also known as Dr. Death, assisted many people in committing suicide. He arrogantly took on the role of God in deciding who was

ready for death. The Terry Schiavo case in Florida is another example of this heinous sin. Man does not have the right to choose the time of his or another's death.

Abortion is taking the lives of countless numbers of innocent babies who have no say in what is being done to them. At least one and a half million babies have been aborted in the US, and yet the Bible says,

“These six *things* doth the LORD hate: yea, seven *are* an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,” (Pr 6:16-17)

For years atheists have tried to have the name of God or any reference to God removed or done away with. We have just recently heard about a Supreme Court case involving removing religious material from public places. There are people and groups who want God's name taken out of the schools, out of the pledge of allegiance, out of the Boy and Girl Scouts, out of the home, out of the work place. Yet, they allow the use of filthy language, dirty jokes and display of immoral images.

God calls those who deny him fools:

“The fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God*. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, *there is none that doeth good*.” (Ps 14:1)

“The fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God*. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: *there is none that doeth good*.” (Ps 53:1)

I heard recently of mothers who were called to school to read to the class. They were allowed to choose the books. All types of books were read, even one on witchcraft. When one mother brought in the Bible, she was barred from reading to the class.

Another incident involved a young boy who read his Bible during his lunch break. Some of the other students began to ask him questions. When the teacher found out, he was told to stop and not to bring the Bible back to school.

In light of all this we need to be like John the Baptist and call people back to the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. We need to be the voice calling in this wilderness of sin. We must be a light in the darkness.

Our prayer is that we can cause people to recognize Christ as the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," and, with that recognition, come and to be obedient to Him.

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Biography

Will Montgomery was born in East Liverpool, Ohio, January 11, 1947. He was baptized into Christ by Frank Higginbotham in Chester, West Virginia, in 1972. He began his preaching career while a deacon at the Chester congregation. He began located work with the East Liverpool congregation in 1981 where he continues into his 24th year.

He has a weekly radio program, has spoken on lectureships, and conducts 2-6 gospel meetings each year.

He is married to the former Anita Miller. They have one daughter, Tracy, who is married to John Knight. They have two grandchildren.

THE LAMB WHO IS A LION

(JESUS AS A CONTROVERSIALIST)

Frank Higginbotham

One of the many comparisons the Bible uses to describe Jesus is that of a lamb. John the Baptist referred to Him as the Lamb of God. “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Jesus is pictured as the Passover lamb who was offered for the sins of mankind. The meekness of a lamb is clearly seen in the life and death of Jesus. However, the Lamb of God is also spoken of as a lion. “And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof” (Rev. 5:5). The characteristics of a lion and of a lamb seem exactly the opposite. Christ demonstrated some of the characteristics of both. He was meek and gentle and yet He aggressively met the challenges of His day. He was aggressive as He drove the moneychangers from the temple. He wanted them to know that His Father’s House was not to be made into a den of thieves. He was not adverse to controversy but answered each situation with firm determination. Never did Jesus demonstrate the characteristics of a lion more than when He engaged in confrontation with false doctrines. It is our purpose in this discussion to look at the side of Christ’s nature that made Him a formidable foe of religious error. He was truly a lion when He met the predominate errors of His day.

Jesus was clearly the victor in a battle with Satan following His baptism. Satan put forth his best effort to defeat God by attempting to get Christ to commit sin. After Jesus was baptized by John He was led away to be tempted by Satan. “Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil” (Mt. 4:1). Jesus was without food for forty days and nights and was very hungry. This afforded a great opportunity for Satan to tempt Jesus to do wrong. “And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread” (Mt. 4:3). Because of extreme hunger Satan expected Jesus to do as he instructed; however, the Son of God was the lion of this occasion. He quoted Scripture to Satan as a defense against sinning. The Word of God is a sure way of turning Satan away. “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Ps. 119:11). Jesus met all three temptations of Satan by saying that “it is written.” “But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Mt. 4:4). Satan then took Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple and encouraged

Christ to cast Himself down assuring Jesus that God would not allow Him to come to any evil. Satan then quoted Scripture in his attempt to cause Jesus to fall. The Lion of Judah would not fall. A third time Satan tried to get Jesus to sin. Christ was asked by Satan to fall down and worship him but again Jesus replied by quoting scripture. “Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Mt. 4:10). The devil then left in defeat. In a similar manner Satan tries to get men to sin today. He uses the same three ways of temptation that he did in the Garden of Eden and that he still uses on us today. “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). The Word of God is the proper answer to every false way. David said, “Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way” (Ps. 119:104). We must imitate Him as we earnestly contend for the faith. The Lion of Judah stood strong and aggressive in His encounter with Satan.

The twenty-second chapter of the book of Matthew records three encounters we would like to notice that show the way the Lord acted as He had encounters with the religious leaders of his day. Parallel accounts are found in Mark the twelfth chapter and in Luke the twentieth chapter.

Jesus put a group called the Herodians to flight when they came asking questions of Him. They were not on their own but were being backed by the Pharisees. “Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in *his* talk. And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any *man*: for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?” (Mt. 22:15-17). Jesus was aware of their evil motives. Coffman made comment on this situation.

“The design of the question is plain from the Herodians having been made a part of the group asking this question. The Herodians ardently advocated Caesar’s cause and favored a complete submission of Israel to Caesar’s government. If Christ had made it unlawful to give tribute to Caesar, they would, of course, have haled him into court on a charge of sedition, punishable by death. On the other hand, if Jesus had made it right to pay the tribute, they would have advertised it in order to diminish his popularity with the people who groaned under Caesar’s yoke and longed to throw it off. They thought they had him impaled upon the horns of a dilemma.” (Coffman 349)

Jesus gave them an answer they were not expecting. He stated that they should give to Caesar the things that were rightfully his, and yet they needed to give to God what was rightfully His. He was not guilty of treason nor was He forsaking His stand for God. Note the reaction of the Herodians. “When they had heard *these words*, they marveled, and left him, and went their way” (Mt. 22:22). We are thus to live in harmony with the laws of the land, but we also have a clear responsibility to our God. We must seek first the kingdom of God. (Mt.6:33). Our lives must be committed to God first. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service*. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God*” (Rom. 12:1-2).

Children of God have a responsibility toward the government of the land where we live. We must pay our taxes and we owe obedience to the government.

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to *execute* wrath upon him that doeth evil” (Rom. 13:1-4).

Obedience to civil government is not at conflict with Christianity.

We also have a debt of responsibility to our God. We have been bought with the blood of Christ. “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?* For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's” (1 Cor. 6:19-20). On one occasion the apostles, Peter and John, were called into question concerning the preaching they were doing. They were given these instructions. “And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus” (Acts 4:18). Here was a contradiction between the law of man and the law of God. The apostles gave this reply. “But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19-20). They were explaining that they had an obligation to God as well as an obligation to civil government. Jesus gave the correct answer

when the Herodians asked if it was right to give tribute to Caesar. The Herodians, backed by the Pharisees felt the sting of defeat at the hand of the Lion of Judah.

Next, we will look at the encounter of the Sadducees and Jesus. One of the major sects of the Jews was the Sadducees. They are described in the Bible in the following way. "For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both" (Acts 23:8). When we realize this, it is incredible to have the following account in Matthew twenty.

"That same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. 'Teacher,' they said, 'Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and have children for him. Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. Finally, the woman died. Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?'" (Mt. 22:23-28).

They seemed to think they had a question that it would be impossible for Jesus to answer. Their hypocrisy was very clear in that they did not even believe in the resurrection. They tried to add to the difficulty of the situation by creating an extreme exaggeration. What are the chances of one woman being married to seven brothers who made her a widow one after another? "Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God" (Mt. 22:29). Their ignorance of the Scriptures was based on their disbelief of the Word of God. If they openly rejected such doctrines as spirits and the resurrection, it is logical that they did not spend time in learning what the Scriptures say. Jesus reminded the Sadducees that in the resurrection there is neither marriage nor the giving in marriage but that all are as the angels. Jesus then proceeded to explain the condition that will exist after the resurrection. "But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Mt.22:31-32). His statement did not suggest that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were now dead but that they were alive at this time. This could not be explained without belief in the resurrection.

This teaching is vitally important to the faith of people today. A major proof for the Sonship of Christ is the resurrection of Christ. "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). A major embarrassment to every infidel from that time to this is the empty tomb. What happened to the body of Jesus? Did the disciples of Jesus come and take His body away? This would

have been impossible in view of the guards and the security the enemies of Christ used to keep this from happening. Did the enemies come and take His body away? This is not believable because they had gone to great lengths to keep His body in the tomb. Could He then have revived and walked away from the tomb? Remember that He was declared dead at the time of the crucifixion. If they had been wrong about His being dead, is it possible that this man in His weakened condition revived enough to roll the stone away and to pass by the alerted guards without their even seeing Him? Those who deny the general resurrection and the resurrection of Jesus are far too late to deny it now. The time to deny the resurrection was on the day of Pentecost. When Peter and the other Apostles stood up and declared that Christ had risen from the dead, why did not the enemies produce the body of Christ? This would have put to an end the talk of the resurrection. Christianity would have been dealt a fatal blow. They did not produce His body because they could not. They did not have it. He has resurrected from the dead. Many witnesses saw Him alive after His death and their testimony could not be denied. The ignorance of the enemies of the Lord in regard to the Word of God proved to be a devastating failure on the part of the Sadducees. The Lion of Judah once more excelled in time of conflict.

The third controversy we want to look at as recorded in Matthew twenty-two is Jesus' encounter with the Pharisees. Their actions were described in verse 34. "But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together" (Mt. 22:34). Once more they began plotting how they might trap Him by the questions they would ask. They asked the Lord, "Which is the great commandment in the law?" (Mt. 22:36). Coffman states this in his commentary.

"One of them means one of the Pharisees. The 'first team' would now take up the challenge, and the Pharisee themselves would confront him with a question in a field wherein they imagined they had a vast superiority. Their strategy was to ensnare Christ in some technical fault regarding countless questions of the law. One of their best legal minds was put forward with a question regarding the "great commandment." Of course it is obvious that they hoped Christ would name a commandment, any commandment. They would then accuse him of belittling the others! That they were themselves guilty of what they hoped to accuse in him was no problem. Their motives and intentions were totally devoid of any honesty or fairness." (Coffman 354)

Christ's answer again surprised them. Rather than singling out just one of the commandments, Jesus chose instruction from the law which involved every one of the commandments. "Thou *art* near, O LORD; and all thy commandments *are* truth" (Ps. 119:151). Jesus replied in this manner. "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment" (Mt.

22:37-38). He next spoke of the second commandment. It was “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” (Mt. 22:39). These two commandments summarize the commandments of the law. When we look at the ten commandments of the law, we see “love God” in the first four of the instructions. Each of these first four commandments describes man’s relationship to his God. The next six of the commands give instruction about the relationship with fellowman. Thus, Jesus did not fall into their trap. No commandment of God was minimized in any way. Jesus then had a question for them. “While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?” (Mt 22:41-42). They tried to avoid the force of His question by referring to His physical ancestors. They said that He was the son of David. This was true, but the Lord would not let them stop at this point. He asked another question. “He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son” (Mt 22:43-45). To say that Jesus was of the lineage of David does not say enough about Him. He is far more than just a descendant of David. Jesus asked His disciples who men said that He was.

“When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some *say that thou art* John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt. 16:13-16).

Were John the Baptist, Elijah, and Jeremiah great men? Were they prophets of God? The answer is yes, but Jesus was more than just a great man. He was the only begotten Son of God. Peter’s answer was correct. Once more the Lion of Judah had put the enemy to flight. “And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any *man* from that day forth ask him any more *questions*” (Mt. 22:46).

The lamb who was a lion had proven His great ability as He engaged in controversy. He met the Herodians, the Sadducees, and the arrogant Pharisees and always showed a man of great strength and more than human ability in overcoming the attempts to turn men in the wrong direction. Any who differ with Christ are on the wrong side. Followers of the Christ have the assurance that they will finally overcome. It is greatly encouraging to know that the Lamb who is a Lion is standing with those who serve Him. “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Rom. 8:37).

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Biography

Frank Higginbotham was born in New Martinsville, WV, February 21, 1933. He is the son of Mr. & Mrs. A. G. (Bus) Higginbotham. He was graduated from Magnolia High School in New Martinsville and from Florida Christian College in Tampa, FL. First located work was at Columbia Street in Fairmont, WV ('53-'56. This was then followed by Wellsburg, WV ('56-'58) and West Street in Weirton, WV ('58-'64) and the Virginia Avenue in Chester ('64 - Present). He is currently in his 40th year at Chester. Radio preaching includes WETZ in New Martinsville, WMMN in Fairmont, WEIR in Weirton and WOHI in East Liverpool, OH. This program is a five-day-a-week, fifteen minute program that began in 1949. He was one of the speakers on a television program in Steubenville, OH over WSTV. He has spoken on various lecture programs. (Ohio Valley College, Ohio Valley Lectures, Greater Kanawha Lectures, West Virginia School of Preaching). He is married to the former Rose King (1954). They had three children. Donna (passed away in 1965), Janie is married to Brent Gallagher, preacher at Oakwood Road in Fairmont, WV. Steve is the preacher at South Green Street in Glasgow, KY. The Higginbotham's have seven grandchildren.

WITHOUT BLEMISH AND SPOT

D. Gene West

1 Peter 1:19

Introduction

In the last days of the gestational period of Israel when Egypt was suffering the birth pangs of the plagues to bring forth a child she did not love and did not want (Ezekiel 16:1-4), God commanded the people who would later become his own peculiar nation, in order to preserve the first born of man and beast among them, to observe a brand new feast known from that time as The Passover. He also commanded that the Hebrews were to feast upon a very special lamb, not only that night but throughout their history, which came, as we shall later see, to be a type of the Messiah. Concerning the lamb, whose blood was to be sprinkled on the lintels and door posts of the Hebrews' houses, and then was to be roasted and eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, God said, *Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats.* (Exodus 12:5; see also Exodus 12:1-28)

Fifteen hundred years later when Jesus of Nazareth came to be immersed by John the Immerser, the great baptizer spoke of the One who was typified by The Passover Lamb, saying, *Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!* (John 1:29) The apostle extraordinaire, Paul spoke of our Messiah in these words, *Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.* (1 Corinthians 5:7)

That the redeeming death of Jesus Christ was pictured in the slaughter of The Passover lambs down through the centuries of Hebrew history must be evident to any one who has even casually read his Bible. The author of the magnificent Book of Hebrews characterized Christ as a lamb without spot and blemish when he asked, *For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?* (Hebrews 9:13-14) Consequently, we should not be at all amazed to read of Peter's describing our Lord's precious blood as that *of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*

Body

In this lesson we wish to give special attention to three things: Jesus presented in the Bible as a Lamb and the concepts of being without spot and blemish. We begin by looking at the word lamb in 1 Peter 1:19 and comparing that with a similar word that is used to characterize Christ in the awesome Book of Revelation.

Speaking of the blood shed by our Lord in his death on the cross of Calvary Peter said, *...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.* (1 Peter 1:19) It is upon the word “lamb” in this text that we wish to focus our attention. The word is *αμνος*, (*amos*) which is the primary word for lamb. It usually had reference to a “yearling” lamb that had begun to develop its strength, and it grew to be a ram. This word is used of Jesus, not only in this text, but in John 1:29 & 36, as well as in Acts 8:32 a quotation from Isaiah 53:7-8. Of this word, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* says,

In the NT Jesus is described as a lamb in three different respects: (a) Acts 8:32 stresses his patient suffering; (b) 1 Peter 1:19 emphasizes the sinlessness and perfection of his sacrifice by the phrase “without blemish and without spot”; (c) Jn. 1:29, 36 describes the atoning power of his death: he bears, *i.e.* wipes out, the sin of the world. (411)

In these pictures of Jesus as the Lamb of God, we have him presented as the Passover Lamb, which was a male lamb of the first year (yearling) which was as perfect as any lamb could be. We must say more about this later.

In the Book of Revelation, John presented another picture of the Lamb of God and used a different word from the one found in the texts mentioned. Of this Lamb, John wrote, *But one of the elders said to me, do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals. And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.* (Revelation 5:5-6) You will notice that in the midst of the throne, the four Zoas, and the elders, stood a Lamb bearing the marks of having been slain. It is more than just interesting that the word John used for the Lamb in this passage is different from the one used above, although it is more than evident that in all these passages the writers are speaking of the same personage; the Lord Jesus Christ. In the above passage John, by inspiration, used the word *αρνιον* (*arnion*), which is a diminutive form of the word lamb. This word refers not to a yearling lamb but to one very small and weak, just a few days old. We do not mean to convey the

idea that the Book of Revelation presents Christ as being a helpless sacrifice in the sense that he could not have prevented men from crucifying him, for that would contradict what the Lord himself said in John 10:17-18 where these words are recorded, *Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.* (John 10:17-18) The sacrifice of Christ upon the cross for the sins of the world was a totally voluntary act. He was forced neither by God nor man to make himself the offering for sin, but did so with a willingness that causes us to stand in wonder. Hence, the diminutive form is used to show purity, innocence, and tenderness rather than Christ's inability to stop his crucifixion, or weakness. We are very much aware that our Lord was introduced in the preceding verse as *the Lion of the tribe of Judah*. Furthermore, even though he is presented as a very small and young Lamb, the Revelator pointed out that he had unlimited power in that he already had seven horns and eyes which represented his being assisted by the Holy Spirit, here called *the seven Spirits of God sent out into the world* (Revelation 5:6). It is also noteworthy that this Lamb bore the marks of having been slain, but was, when John saw him, alive and well.

The only other time this particular diminutive form of the word lamb is used in the New Testament is in John 21:15 in which Jesus said to Peter, *Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these? He said to Him, yes, Lord; You know that I love You. He said to him, feed My lambs.* (John 21:15) The word is used in the text to refer to the disciples, or followers of Christ. The use of the word here suggests two things to this student. (1) That the followers of the Lamb take on the nature of the Lamb. (2) That when it comes to salvation from sin we are truly as weak as new born lambs and must depend on our Lord to provide that salvation for us. Where is the man who through his own might and main can capture salvation for himself? If even one such person exists, Jesus died in vain, did he not? We praise God for the Lamb without whose sacrificial death on the cross, death would not pass over us!

Peter used two profound words to describe this perfect Lamb by whose blood we are cleansed from all unrighteousness. The first of those was that we are redeemed by the blood of Christ, *as of a lamb without blemish...* The words "without blemish," come from ἀμωμος (amomos), which according to Perschbacher, means, blameless (19). *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* makes several interesting comments regarding the use of this word that we think are worthy of our attention. The authors tell us that the word is used in the New Testament with reference to the moral and religious piety of Christians. (IV, 831) Of course, the only way even Christians can remain blameless is to be continually cleansed by the blood of Christ as we walk in the light (1 John 1:7-9). The same source tells us that the word refers to the "absolute blamelessness of God himself." (830) Surely, this is the way the

inspired Apostle is using the word in reference to Christ in the passage under discussion. Since Jesus Christ is God the Son, he would share in the absolute blamelessness of God the Father and of God the Holy Spirit. There is no imperfection of any kind in *Elohim*, and since our Lord is one of the persons of *Elohim*, there was/is no imperfection in him. Hauck, in his article on this matter in the *TDNT* penned, “The OT demand that sacrifices be without physical blemish finds its NT fulfillment in the perfect moral blamelessness (Hb. 4:15; 7:26) of the Redeemer who sacrifices Himself.” (831)

Peter intended to convey the idea of absolute perfection in the Lamb whose blood was shed for the imperfect when he spoke of the Lamb as being without blemish. We have already pointed out from the 12th chapter of Exodus that physical perfection was one of the requirements placed on the lamb slain at the Passover. However, it is the spiritual perfection of the Son of God who lived in human form without sin to which Peter makes reference here. Of him the inspired author of Hebrews wrote,

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15) Of this Lamb the same author penned, *For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens...* (Hebrews 7:26)

We emphasize that our Sacrifice was “without sin, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” This is absolute perfection in every sense of the word! There is no sense in which our Lord lacked any of the perfection needed to be the “once for all” sacrifice for mankind. So, when Peter spoke of his being without blemish, he meant the Christ whose blood redeems us from all unrighteousness was perfect beyond our ability to comprehend, as perfect as the Father himself. Praise God for his matchless gift!

Peter further described the Lamb as being “without spot.” These words were no doubt used to emphasize the perfection of the Master, yet they deserve a few moments’ attention. The words come from *ασπιλος* (*aspilos*), which according to Thayer means, “spotless, free from censure, irreproachable, free from vice, unsullied.” (81) Not only was Christ morally free from any blemish, which one might liken to the smallest of scars or a blotch on the skin, but he was also free of the slightest smudge that might even temporarily mar the perfect beauty of his nature. Of this man Peter later wrote,

For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body

on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed. (1 Peter 2:21-24)

Consequently, though the Spirit inspired Peter to use a second word to emphasize the perfection of Christ, the final concept is no different from his being without blemish. Jesus was the absolutely perfect sacrifice offered to redeem mankind from all our sins. When God gave a Lamb to redeem the world, he gave One with the perfection that only heaven can afford! Since our holy God accepts only what is sinless and blameless, when he gave a sacrifice to redeem man, he gave only that which is sinless and blameless.

Writing on this passage in the Gospel Advocate series of commentaries on the New Testament, the astute Guy N. Woods made this observation,

In comparing the blood of Christ with that of a Lamb “without blemish and without spot,” the doctrine of atonement through the sacrifice of Christ and by means of his shed blood, is clearly and unmistakably taught. Peter had heard it earlier stated by John the Baptist, “Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29), and he repeats and gives emphasis to it here. The law of Moses required that all sacrifices be without blemish and spot (Lev. 4:32; 22:22-24; Num. 28:3, 11), so that in them there should be no pollution or defilement whatsoever. In any atonement, it is necessary that the sacrifice should itself be free of the pollution it is designed to expiate; and Jesus, in the absolute sense, complied with this requirement, being utterly and wholly without sin. He was “without blemish,” being perfect; and “without spot,” undefiled by the world. (Commentary on Peter, John and Jude, 46)

At this juncture we must point out that such a lesson could not be considered complete without our asking a very important question. Why should God be willing to offer the blood of his Lamb, without blemish and without spot, to expiate for sinful man? What makes us so important in the eyes of God that he would even consider offering his Son as the propitiation for our sins?

Before we attempt to answer this question, let us cite three passages of Scripture that bear heavily on that answer. In 2 Corinthians 5:21, Paul wrote,

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. The second passage is found in 1 Peter 2:24. Here the inspired Peter wrote, ...who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed. Again, one of the sons of thunder wrote, And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. (1 John 2:2)

These passages plainly demonstrate that it was the plan of God to offer his only begotten Son as the sacrifice to redeem the world. Paul emphasized that this plan was in the mind of God before the foundation of the world when he wrote, *...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love...* (Ephesians 1:4) In his sermon, “The Sinless Suffering for the Guilty,” the late J. H. Garrison penned, “Higher motive does not lie within the range of human conception than that God, in order to our reconciliation and righteousness, should permit His sinless Son to bear the sins of the whole world and suffer as if Himself were guilty.” (Half-hour Studies at the Cross, 85) Garrison continued,

An ethical difficulty has been raised by some as to the righteousness and justice of God in permitting the innocent to suffer for the guilty. But this difficulty arises out of a failure to recognize the voluntariness of Christ’s suffering. Surely we cannot deny to Christ the right to go beyond the requirements of justice, and to give such an expression of His love for man and of His subjection to His Father’s will, as would result in bringing sinful men into a state of righteousness. Even parental love in human hearts does not stop to ask what law or justice requires it to do to rescue erring and imperiled children, but only what it *can* do to save the objects of its love. How much more would God “so love the world as to give His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life!” (86)

Garrison, without doubt, has hit on the only motive God has in redeeming man that we can understand. That motive is love, and love is why Jesus suffered as the Lamb without blemish and without spot, shedding his blood that we might be cleansed from all sin. Whether or not we can fathom that kind of love, is not the question, for undoubtedly we cannot. However, the fact that we cannot understand his love did not keep God from “so” (adverb of degree) loving us that he willingly, zealously, and freely gave his only begotten Son to die on the cross of Calvary for our redemption. The Lord said that a man cannot show greater love than to lay down his life for his friends, but God showed greater love than that because while we were still sinners, enemies of God, he demonstrated his love for us by suffering Christ to die on that old rugged cross on that hill far away. The unfathomable depths and unattainable heights of the profound and lofty love should stand out before us in bold relief, causing us to pour out the never ending thanks of our hearts for his incomprehensible love—a love that will not let us go until we make the final decision to reject it completely.

His love for man was so shared by the Lamb himself that he willingly gave himself for our redemption. Of this giving Paul wrote, *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.* (2 Corinthians

8:9) Thank God for the blood shed by his Lamb who was without blemish and without spot!

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Biography

Education

- Hancock County, WV Public Schools
Freed-Hardeman (College) University, Henderson, Tennessee - A.A. Religious Education.
West Liberty State College, West Liberty, West Virginia - A.B. (Liberal Arts) Philosophy, Religion, Spanish, Speech.
Fairmont State College, Fairmont, West Virginia - B.S. Community Psychology.

Work History

- 2001 - Hillview Terrace church of Christ, Moundsville, West Virginia.
1990 - 2001 - Steelton church of Christ, 69 East Thistle Drive, New Martinsville, West Virginia.
1977 - 1990 - Oakwood Road church of Christ, Fairmont, West Virginia.
1973 - 1977 - Grand Central Avenue church of Christ, Vienna, West Virginia.
1966 - 1973 - Hillview Terrace church of Christ, Moundsville, West Virginia.
1961 - 1966 - Church of Christ, Kissimmee, Florida.
1959 - 1961 - Church of Christ, Martins Ferry, Ohio.
1956 - 1959 - Church of Christ, Hundred, West Virginia.

Personal

Born: Chester, West Virginia May 27, 1936. Baptized into Christ by brother Jess W. Nutter, Chester, West Virginia, April 11, 1950. Married Shirley Ann Bissett West, August 5, 1957. We are the parents of three children, Kandi (Ken) Davis of Canal Winchester, Ohio, Mary Amy (Dan) Kessinger of St. Marys, West Virginia, and Todd C. (Donna) West of Morgantown, West Virginia. We have six grandchildren, Nathan, Jacob, Rebekah, and Aaron Davis, and Daniel James (D.J.) and Thomas Kessinger.

Other Work Experience

Taught five years at Ohio Valley College, Parkersburg, West Virginia, and presently teach and have taught for eight years at the West Virginia School of Preaching, Moundsville, West Virginia. Former owner and editor of *BIBLE HERALD*, a gospel journal in West Virginia.

THE BEST THINGS IN LIFE

Johnny Ramsey

Money cannot buy the *peace* that passeth understanding (Philippians 4:7). Fame cannot compare with the satisfaction one gets from seeking first God's kingdom (Matthew 6:33). Prestige among man is not even a hollow facsimile of a closer walk with the Lord (Colossians 1:10). Athletic ability will never measure up to spiritual verities (I Timothy 4:7-8). Special honors from the elite will always come in second to the sacred word of Jesus.

"Enter in to the joys of thy lord"

Hell-bound Americans - living in the luxury of \$500,000 homes, many automobiles, boats, summer houses and constant entertainment - must admit that "the best things in life are free." The beauty of nature - a babbling brook, a shady forest, a snow-capped mountain - often thrill us far more than the finest amusement park or the greatest sports activity. Truly, the Psalmist captures this point:

"The heavens declare the glory of God;
the firmament showeth His handiwork."

One of the best things in life is knowing we have spent one day in the service of the Master. Many times, late on Sunday night, after preaching and teaching four or five times that day, I have had the most satisfying calmness flood my soul. The privilege of proclaiming God's sacred Scriptures had overwhelmed me. Leading lost souls out of darkness into light had been the burden and urgency during the day the Lord had made. There is no grander feeling in the world. Praise God for the honor of serving Him! Sadly, many have never comprehended the joy of such a moment. It reminds me of Romans 5:5 where Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to tell us that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts.

It may seem strange to include the following observation in an article on the best things in life; nevertheless, I never cease to thank God for the power, beauty, and comfort of the Bible when called upon to console an audience during a funeral service. Especially have we noticed the impact of the Word upon the bereaved family. I have preached at funerals where flowers worth thousands of dollars were lining the walls. Other expressions of sympathy representing hundreds of dollars also paled into nothingness as far as real comfort was concerned. What a joy it has been to let the Bible speak to broken hearts and swollen eyes and lonely spirits and to observe the deep

compassionate tenderness of its tones upon the lives of those present. Money cannot buy the things that really count.

Can any earthly transaction even touch the hem of the garment when placed beside the abiding grandeur a parent basks in when "his children walk in Truth" (III John 4)? What supreme blessings we enjoy when beloved offspring grow up to shed abroad the glory of Christ to their fellows! To hear a son preach the gospel, lead singing, direct minds in prayer, teach a Bible class or take charge of the lord's supper — and do so in reverence and depth - truly makes every parental effort worthwhile. I have always thought Proverbs 23:26 was powerful:

"My son, give me thine heart."

But one thing is greater: Sons and Daughters Who Give Their Hearts To God! May we so live, as parents that when we come to die and our children stand over our lifeless forms they can honestly say

"Daddy was a Christian"

or

"Mother was a genuine follower of the Lord."

The best things in life are free but we must work diligently to make them come true!

THE SOUL OF A CHILD

The soul of a child is the loveliest flower,
That grows in the Garden of God.
Its climb is from weakness to knowledge and power,
To the sky, from the clay and the clod.
To beauty and sweetness it grows under care,
Neglected, 'tis ragged and wild.
'Tis a plant that is tender, and wondrously rare -
The sweet, wistful soul of a child!
Be tender, O gardener, and give it its share
Of moisture, of warmth, and of light.
And let it not lack for thy painstaking care
To protect it from frost and from blight.
A glad day will come when its bloom shall unfold,
It will seem that an angel has smiled,
Reflecting a beauty and sweetness untold
In the sensitive soul of a child.

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CONVERSION TO THE LAMB

THE CONVERSION OF THE ETHIOPIAN

ED MELOTT

INTRODUCTION:

1. Read account: Acts 8:26-39.
 - a. Examples of conversion are important: (1) To show how a matter is done and (2) to encourage others to “go and do likewise.”
 - b. The Lord knew how important examples were; therefore, He dedicated an entire book of the N.T. to cases of conversion.
 - c. Those conversions recorded in the Bible have passed twice under the supervision of the Holy Spirit: (1) the preacher of the occasion was guided by the Spirit and (2) when Luke recorded the story, the Holy Spirit guided and governed his writings. Therefore, the conversions in the Bible are genuine and cannot possibly be frauds.
2. Jesus' mission was to “seek and to save...” (Lk. 19:10; 1 Tim. 1:15).
3. He left that mission in the hands of men (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16; Lk. 24:46-47: Mark’s emphasis here is on belief, Luke’s on repentance, and Matthew’s on baptism).
 - a. The apostles, who had the “keys to the Kingdom” (Matt. 16:19; 18:18), began preaching on Pentecost (Acts 2) and 3,000 were converted (Acts 2:41).
 - b. Peter and John, at the hour of prayer came to the temple to preach; upon entering the temple’s gate called beautiful, they healed a man who couldn’t walk (Acts 3:6-8). The people running to the apostles gave them great opportunity to preach the Gospel. Peter told them to repent and be converted (3:19), two thousand more were converted (4:4).
 - c. “Believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women” (Acts 5:14). “Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying” (Acts 6:1). “Then the Word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great

many of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7).

4. An occasion arose for the apostles to appoint seven men to help with the daily ministrations of physical necessities, for, said the apostles, “It is not desirable that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables ...we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:2, 4). These seven men were chosen, set before the apostles, who laid their hands upon them. Though these men were chosen to “serve tables,” at least two of them were actively engaged in preaching the Gospel and doing great wonders and signs: Stephen before the great persecution (Acts 6:8-7:60), Philip after the great persecution began (Acts 8:1ff). “They that were scattered went everywhere preaching the Word” (8:4). Philip went down to the city of Samaria (8:5), and, upon hearing about Jesus, the multitudes heeded the things spoken and there was great joy in that city (8:5-8).

DISCUSSION:

I. THE COMMANDS

- A. An angel commanded: “Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (After the church in Samaria had been supplied with spiritual gifts, Philip was called away into other fields of service).
 1. A distance of about fifty miles (which he traveled by foot).
 2. The road from Jerusalem lead via Bethlehem and Hebron and joined the main road to Egypt just south of Gaza.
 3. Luke refers to this place as “desert” (not void of water –Mk. 6:32). This exactness helps give us more faith in the inspiration of the Bible for there were two Gazas. Gaza had been destroyed in 93 B.C. and a new Gaza had been built to the south in 57 B.C. The first Gaza was called old or Desert Gaza to distinguish it from the other. The traffic of half the world traveled by this road.
- B. The Spirit commanded “Go near and overtake this chariot.”
 1. Chariots were manned by one, two, or even three men. The *Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (1980, Tyndale, I. 261) has a picture of a miniature chariot from the Oxus treasure. It has two wheels and is drawn by four horses; it had a driver, one passenger, and room for at least one other on the seat.
 2. Philip ran to him! (Perhaps he had to catch the chariot).

- C. The angel's and the Spirit's involvement in this conversion in the miraculous age was not in the heart of the sinner but rather in commanding the preacher and giving him the words to speak (2 Cor. 4:7).

II. THE CHARACTER A nameless man from Ethiopia (meaning burned countenance or black, this context refers to ancient Nubia)

A. A eunuch (emasculated male).

1. Jesus said, "For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake" (Matt. 19:12).
2. Under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians
 - a. "Candace" was a title like that of King or Pharaoh.
 - b. "Archaeological light on the group of queens called Candace was found by McIver in his excavations in Nubia, 1908-1909. In the Christian period these Nubians still called their queen Candace; they gave her milk to drink, regarding obesity an attribute of royalty" (Jackson, Acts, 98).
3. Who had charge of all her treasury (a responsible man in a responsible position, though not all treasurers are so honest – Jn. 12:1-6).

B. He had a great interest in spiritual matters:

1. Who had come to Jerusalem to worship:
 - a. Either a Jew or a proselyte. History tells us that there were several colonies of Jews living in and around Egypt during this time.
 - b. This eunuch had traveled approximately 1,000 miles to worship at maybe 3 or 4 mph. (perhaps as much as a month of travel each direction).
2. Who was reading Isaiah the prophet (Isa. 53:7-8). 59% of Isaiah anticipates Christ.
 - a. He could have read of the new kingdom (Isa. 2:2-4).
 - b. Perhaps he had read of the virgin birth (Isa. 7:14).

- c. Maybe he had read of the One whose name was “Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6).
- d. He could have read of the “Branch of Jesse” (Isa. 11:1).
- e. He may have read about the “Highway of holiness” (Isa. 35:8).
- f. We know that he was reading of the Suffering Servant (Isa. 53).

III. THE QUESTIONS

A. “Do you understand what you are reading?” (30).

1. A moment of reflection: This eunuch was undoubtedly a rich man with a great deal of authority, riding in what was probably his personal chariot, with his own driver and was reading from a very expensive copy of Isaiah. Picture now a man, perhaps not wearing the finest clothes, and the condition that he would be in after completing two marathons, running toward this Ethiopian treasurer. Add to that the way that Philip interrupted the man with a question which would insult so many—“Do you understand what you are reading?” Some would have answered, “Certainly I do! Do you mean to insult me by imagining I would be reading something that I don’t understand? He very humbly responded ...

B. “How can I, unless someone guides me?” (31).

1. Some would no doubt question the intelligence of this man by saying, “Surely, he ought to have known to whom that refers.” If it were not for the completed Revelation of Jesus Christ, there would not be one among us who could fully understand what we were reading!
2. This great man of authority was humble enough to admit that he had more questions than answers (Jas. 1:19).
3. He was willing to sit at Philip’s feet and kneel at Christ’s!
4. Paul made it very clear that we can understand what we are reading when he wrote—“how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)” (Eph. 3:3-4).

- C. “Of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?” (34). Then Philip opened his mouth ...

IV. THE CHRIST – “preached Jesus to Him” (35; 8:5, 12; 1 Cor. 2:2; Preaching: I Cor. 1:21; 2 Tim. 4:1-2; Rom. 10:13-17).

- A. From this text we learn of certain of the characteristics of Jesus (Acts 8:32-33; Isa. 53:7-8). He was/is a:
1. Submissive Savior (32a; Jn. 10:17-18)
 2. Silent Savior (32b; I Pet. 2:23)
 3. Suffering Savior (33a)
 4. Slain Savior (33b)
- B. Must have preached Christ as the fulfillment of O. T. (Matt. 5:17; Lk. 24:27; Jn. 5:39; Heb. 10:7).
- C. Must have preached the abrogation of the O.T. (Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14; Heb. 8:7-13).
- D. Must have preached about the necessity of obedience to the Gospel (8:36; Heb. 5:8-9; Matt. 7:21; Mk. 16:16).
- E. May have mentioned God’s providential working in bringing them together. Philip would have been required to leave Samaria prior to the Ethiopian’s departure from Jerusalem. O, the great providence of God! (Rom. 8:28).

V. THE CONVERSION

- A. “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?” (36).
1. Not one word of Philip’s sermon is recorded; however, the Ethiopian’s question speaks volumes about its content.
 2. He must have taught the necessity of baptism (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 10:48; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27; I Pt. 3:21).
 3. Some contend, “Preach Christ and leave baptism out of it.”
 - a. With such a way of preaching, we could not even introduce Christ into the world (Matt. 3:13-17).

- b. Jesus' last Words would have to be amended for these were His final marching orders to His disciples (Matt. 28:18-20).
 - c. The one who preaches Christ and leaves out baptism preaches a gospel other than that recorded in the N. T. (Gal. 1:6-9).
4. The Ethiopian was required to confess Christ (Matt. 10:32-33).
- B. God's Word has converting power (Heb. 4:12; Psa. 19:7; Acts 3:19; Rom. 1:16; Jas. 1:21).

VI. THE CONCLUSION:

- A. "He went on his way rejoicing" (8:39).
- 1. Joy of salvation (Phil. 2:16-18; 4:4; 1 Th. 5:16).
 - 2. Perhaps he remembered reading and turned the scroll back to what we know as Isa. 52:7—"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says in Zion, your God reigns."
- B. If your conversion corresponds to this one, you too can rejoice in that you have been saved through your obedience to the truth. If not, my friend, do what this man did to become a New Testament Christian.

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BIOGRAPHY

Ed Melott was born in Clarksburg, WV on December 14, 1978 and was reared mostly in Doddridge County, WV. He is married to the former Kimberly Baker (1996) and has two children: a son, Hunter, who is eight and a daughter, Kameron, who is three. Ed is a 2001 graduate of the West Virginia School of Preaching. He has worked with the Proctor church of Christ in Proctor, WV, the Pike church of Christ in Ellenboro, WV and presently serves the Steelton Church of Christ in New Martinsville, WV.

THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB

Terry G. Jones

No grander theme is available for our studious consideration than the one chosen for this lecture program. What higher thoughts can the human mind entertain than those stirred up by the exclamation – “Worthy Is The Lamb!” The Lamb is none other than Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Savior of us all. Of what is He worthy? As far as the human race is concerned, He is worthy of all we have to give. He is worthy of our worship, our devotion, our service and even our life. Tillit S. Teddlie phrased it well in that classic old hymn, “*Worthy Art Thou!*”

“Worthy of praise is Christ our Redeemer;
Worthy of glory, honor and pow’r!
Worthy of all our soul’s adoration,
Worthy art Thou! Worthy art Thou!

Worthy of riches, blessings and honor,
Worthy of wisdom, glory and pow’r!
Worthy of earth and heaven’s thanksgiving,
Worthy art Thou! Worthy art Thou!”

Then it may be asked, “What is it that qualifies the Lamb to be thus worthy?” There are three unique characteristics of the Lamb that set Him apart from all others. First, the Lamb is worthy because He is selfless. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (Jn. 1:1, 14). Christ was willing to leave the glory of Heaven and suffer the most horrible agonies this world has to offer because He loves all of mankind and He knew that only He could save us from the eternal consequences of our sins. By so doing, He set before us the clearest example of selflessness that exists. Second, the Lamb is worthy because He is sinless. “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are, yet without sin*” (Heb. 4:15). Thirdly, the Lamb is worthy because of His sacrifice. “And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma” (Eph. 5:2). He is worthy because He served as our sacrificial Lamb as He died on that blood stained cross for our sins.

It is that third characteristic that provides the subject assigned for this lecture – “*The Blood Of The Lamb!*” The consequence of sin is eternal

damnation, but for the faithful there is victory in Jesus. “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death” (Rev. 12:11). As we now focus our attention on the most precious of all things, let us consider these three prominent aspects of “*The Blood Of The Lamb!*”

The Significance Of The Blood Of The Lamb

From Genesis to Revelation the Bible is a book on blood. The word blood appears 447 times in the Bible. It may be found 346 times in the Old Testament and 101 times in the New Testament. Obviously, being found with such frequency on the pages of Holy Writ, we must conclude that God has placed a great deal of significance upon blood.

We are introduced to the significance of blood very early when, “Abel also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering” (Gen. 4:4). In the Book of Exodus, the divine remedy for saving the lives of every firstborn of the families of Israel was accomplished by the shedding of the blood of a lamb and putting it on the doorposts and lintel. God explained, “Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you *are*. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy *you* when I strike the land of Egypt” (Ex. 12:13). Numerous animal sacrifices were required by the Law of Moses. The prophets foretold of the coming Messiah who would shed His blood for the sins of all mankind. “...He was led as a lamb to the slaughter” (Is. 53:7). The New Testament writers clarified that it is by the blood of Christ that the penalty for sin was paid. John the baptist exclaimed, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (Jn. 1:29)

The blood has both physical and spiritual significance. Physically, where there is no blood there is no life, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood...” (Lev. 17:11). Following the flood, God said to Noah, “Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, *that is*, its blood” (Gen. 9:3-4). The spiritual significance is found in the blood of Christ who died to save us all. “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:7). Sin separates man from God (Is. 59:1-2), but redemption is realized in the cross. “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ” (Eph. 2:13).

The Shedding Of The Blood Of The Lamb

The universal problem of sin and its consequences was remedied by the shedding of the blood of the Lamb. Under the Old Covenant every animal sacrificed was a type of the only effective sacrifice that was ever offered.

“For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those *sacrifices there is* a reminder of sins every year. For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins” (Heb. 10:1-4).

Think of the millions of animals that were sacrificed during the time period between Abel and Christ. Imagine the vast amount of blood that was shed, and, yet, it did not take away a single sin. Only the shed blood of the perfect Lamb of God could take away sins (Jn. 1:29). When Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper, “Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matt. 26:27-28). The salvation of the human race was dependant upon the shedding of the blood of the Lamb of God.

The Salvation By The Blood Of The Lamb

“And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission” (Heb. 9:22). The word of God is very clear that saving the souls of sinful men is made possible only by the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ on Calvary’s cross. That salvation is obtained only by contact with that blood in baptism. Jesus connected the shedding of His blood and remission of sins (Matt. 26:28). John said, “To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood” (Rev. 1:5). Revelation 5:9 states, “...You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation.” We are cleansed by the blood of Christ when we are baptized for the remission of sins. “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:3-4). Ananias told Saul of Tarsus, “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). John stated that sins are washed away by the blood of Christ, while Ananias said that baptism washes away sins. Therefore, the only conclusion that can be drawn is that the blood of Christ cleanses a sinner when he is baptized in water.

The only cleansing agent for sin is the blood of the Lamb. “Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious

blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Pet. 1:18-19). The eternal inhabitants of heaven will be those who have been washed in the blood by baptism and faithful living. “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 Jn. 1:7). “...These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:14)

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BIOGRAPHY

Terry G. Jones was born in Parkersburg, West Virginia, and was raised in Toll Gate, West Virginia. He is the son of Glenn and Linda Jones. He married Melinda S. Hilvers on August 10, 1985. They now have two sons: Austin (Age 19) and Quintin (Age 16).

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THE LAMB'S BOOK OF LIFE

Frank Higginbotham

The Lord is compared in the Word of God to the "lamb" of the Old Testament. The Passover lamb of God's dealings with the children of Israel is a type of the lamb sacrificed in order for us to have the hope of redemption. In Exodus chapter twelve there is specific instruction given concerning the lamb without spot or blemish that was sacrificed for the children of Israel. Christ is our Passover. "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7). John the Baptist introduced Christ to the world as the Lamb of God. "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Isaiah described the trial before the crucifixion of Jesus and compared the actions of Christ to that of a lamb. "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" (Isa. 53:7).

One of the qualities attributed to the Lamb of God is that He is the keeper of the book of life. "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither *whatsoever* worketh abomination, or *maketh* a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21:27). After describing the grandeur of Heaven it is made clear that nothing that would defile it would enter into it. Entrance was based on having your name recorded in the Lamb's book of life. The conclusion is that if your name is recorded in this book, you would be found acceptable to enter in. After studying this passage, the importance of being enrolled in this book becomes very clear to us. We next invite your attention to some of the things the Bible makes known about this book that belongs to the Lamb of God.

The Lamb's book is a record of those who have served God faithfully.

"Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." (Rev. 3:4-5).

In the Lord's letter to Sardis He reminded them that they still had some who had remained loyal to God, and He gave the promise that He would not remove their name from the book of life. We thus conclude that the Lamb's book contains the names of those who are faithful to the Lord. When judgment

comes, the record of the works of all people will be opened. God will judge all men by the things done while living here on the earth. How foolish men are when they neglect and waste their time here on the earth. Many seem to think that time here is just for our own pleasure. Our duty in life is explained by the wise man named Solomon. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man" (Eccl. 12:13). All things we have done will be there, and we will give account for them. "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Rev. 20:12).

The terrible consequence of not having our name recorded in the Lamb's book is described in Revelation 20:15. "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Paul, the Apostle reminds us that we will answer according to the deeds we have done while we lived. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). Solomon made reference to this same event in the book of Ecclesiastes. "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil" (Eccl. 12:14). There will be no legitimate argument over the record in that day. Some will appeal their case but to no avail. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Mt. 7:21-23). We will have an accurate record of the activities of our lives and will account to God for our conduct. Those who have their names in the book of life will be saved.

A question we need to answer is in regard to how we get our name enrolled in this great book. Not everyone has his or her name there, so what must be done to have it placed there? The Lord writes down the names of those who are in His church. "To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb. 12:23). When the Lord adds men to His church He adds their names to the book of life. Their names are recorded in Heaven. "Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). When men and women obeyed the Lord in the second chapter of Acts, they were added by the Lord to His church. No man does this work. It is done by the Lord, and this is also true today. Men who are guilty of sin should want to know what they must do in order to be saved. The proper answer to this question was given by the Apostle Peter.

“Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38).

People do many different things in their attempt to be added to the church and to have their names enrolled in Heaven, but the Lord only recognizes one way for this to be done. Those who repent of sins and are baptized for the remission of those sins are added by the Lord to His church, and He then records their names in the Lamb's book of life.

Is it possible for us to have our name recorded and then to have it removed? The answer is yes. When Moses was pleading for Israel, this discussion of their condition is recorded. “Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book” (Ex. 32:32-33). John made known this same fact. “And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book” (Rev. 22:19).

Followers of John Calvin have long taught that once we are saved from past sins it becomes impossible for us to fall from the grace of God. This terrible doctrine, when believed, gives a person a false security and discourages faithful living. Does the Bible teach it? The answer is clearly no. If God takes some names away from the book of life, this doctrine is plainly denied by Bible teachings. In his letter to the churches of Galatia, Paul speaks of some who returned to the Old Testament law and thus fell from grace. “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:4). Note Paul's observation about himself. “But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Cor. 9:27). If the great Apostle Paul could have behaved in such a manner that he would be a castaway, why would we think it to be impossible for us to fall? The Hebrew letter gives warning about this false doctrine. “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb. 3:12). When people are led to believe that they cannot lose their salvation, it becomes increasingly easy for them to fall back on the commitment made to the Lord. To be aware that it is possible to lose our way even though we have made a good start keeps us striving to remain faithful to our vocation. We can have our names removed from the Lamb's book of life. We are obligated to do what is necessary to keep it there. Our effort must be to keep our name recorded in the book of life.

What is necessary to keep our name in the Lamb's book? We must live faithful lives. "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2). It is amazing that we easily understand faithfulness when it comes to matters in this life but then draw a blank when it comes to faithfulness to the Lord. We would easily know if a man is faithful to his wife by observing his conduct. The faithfulness of a car would not be declared if it started occasionally. Why then do we think a man is faithful if he occasionally shows up for services. God comes first in the life of a true servant of God. He is not just first in our lives when we are in trouble or in need of help. Our faithfulness must be even to the point of being willing to give our lives for the Lord. "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

Our faithfulness involves doing service for our Master. Matthew, chapter twenty, describes the Lord's work as a vineyard. Men enter a vineyard to do work. The church is the vineyard of the Lord. We enter the church in order to work for our Lord. Our militant work is to preach the gospel to the lost around us. This obligation is placed by God on His church. "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). The church is like a pillar that holds up a building. It upholds the truth to the world. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). The faithful are the ones who willingly carry this message of salvation to the world. There is always a need for more workers. "Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly *is* plenteous, but the labourers *are* few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Mt. 9:37-38). We are surrounded by a world lost in sin, and we have the answer that is needed in the gospel. We cannot afford to fail to take it to the world. The Lord is depending upon us. The most urgent work in all the world is for the church to get the message of salvation to those who are lost. The Lamb's book of life contains the names of God's servants who faithfully discharge their obligation. "And I entreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and *with* other my fellowlabourers, whose names *are* in the book of life" (Phil. 4:3).

What blessings are associated with having our names recorded by the Lord in His book of life? Those who are written there experience the joy of living the Christian life. Some seem to think that there is no real joy in being a Christian. The happiest life we could live is the life of a Christian. Paul's letter to the church at Philippi explains to them that there is real joy in serving God. After describing some who have their names recorded in the Lord's book, Paul

encourages them to rejoice and be happy. “Rejoice in the Lord always: *and* again I say, Rejoice” (Phil. 4:4). One of the many reasons for rejoicing greatly is explained by Paul as he closes his letter to the church. “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19). Living in such a way that we have God who supplies our needs should be a source of great happiness. He will always be there. “*Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me*” (Heb. 13:6). Having the Lord by our side and supplying all our needs should be a source of real joy and happiness. Even when the time of death comes, the Lord will be with us. “*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me*” (Ps. 23:4). In view of God's being with us in our lives, we are encouraged to live in happiness and to rejoice always.

Another advantage we have if our name is written in the Lamb's book of life is that we have peace of mind. Troubled minds fill the world about us. People everywhere are looking for peace.

“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things” (Phil. 4:6-8).

Paul describes the peace that comes with Christianity as being a peace that is beyond the comprehension of many. Troubled minds are soothed by the assurances of the Christian life. Instead of dealing with guilt and thoughts of evil, we are to fill our minds with thoughts of pure and noble things. Jesus said, “Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Mt. 5:8).

The hope of Heaven is so important to the child of God that Paul connects it with our salvation. “For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?” (Rom. 8:24). Our hope for heaven keeps us going in our daily effort to please our God. It is described as an anchor for the soul. “Which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil” (Heb. 6:19). When we begin to waver, it is our hope that keeps us in line and keeps us from being led astray. Stability comes by holding on to our hope of Heaven when life here is over.

Note the qualities of Heaven that make it desirable for us. “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Rev. 21:4). As we think of a place where no tears exist and where death is not a part of our everyday walk of life, it is hard to imagine anyone who would not want to go there. Pain is so commonplace that we can hardly imagine a place where we would not have to deal with it. These things describe Heaven, a place prepared for the righteous and for those who have their names enrolled in the Lamb’s book of life.

The blessing of being in God’s presence in eternity is a result of having our name recorded by Christ. Our effort should be to have our name enrolled as we obey the Lord’s instruction to obtain the remission of sins and then to live a faithful Christian life so that our name is not blotted out of the book of life.

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THE LAMB'S MEMORIAL

Phil Grear

In just a matter of hours Jesus would be facing the horrible ordeal of Gethsemane and Calvary. He had assembled with his disciples in an upper room in Jerusalem and discussed with them what they needed to remember after his departure. He did this in the very shadow of the cross that awaited him the next morning. After hours of agony and prayer, he underwent a series of "trials" designed to put a good face on his completely unjustified execution. Roman soldiers then nailed him to a cross. After six hours of excruciating pain and humiliation he died, having shed his precious life's blood for the sins of all mankind. He was the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." (John 1:29)

After observing the final Passover authorized by his Father, he instituted a memorial of his own. It was to be observed as long as the world stands and serve as a continuous reminder of his tremendous sacrifice. "And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." (Luke 22:19-20) This memorial could have been more complicated, but it could not be more meaningful. He left a wonderfully simple memorial that can be observed almost anywhere. It is a reminder of the most wonderful display of love the world has ever seen.

Why do we still partake of the Lord's Supper nearly two thousand years later? It is not simply because he commanded it, but also because it is good for us. We do it as he instructed because we want to honor him. He did not leave the method of observance up to us. He was specific in how his memorial was to be done, and man has no right to change what Jesus has specified. We please Christ only if we do it his way. His instruction was, "*This do in remembrance of me*" (Luke 22:19). With that simple statement, often found on the front of our communion tables, he clearly established the memorial he wanted.

"This Do in Remembrance of Me"

Clearly Jesus attached great significance to this memorial feast. He could have said and done many things that fateful night, but he took a large portion of his very limited time to institute and emphasize this event. He said, "*This do in remembrance of me.*" So the question arises, "What did he mean when he said, "*This do*"? This question is of great significance for us because

he later instructed his disciples to teach us "to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:18-20) So we are also commanded to do as they did. He wants exactly the same thing from us that he did from them.

So, exactly what did he tell them to do? They were to commemorate his death on certain occasions by doing certain things. He did not say, "This say in remembrance of me," or, "This think in remembrance of me." His sacrifice was not just to be something talked about in sermons, or discussed in conversation. He wanted this, but he also wanted more.

He specified that certain elements were to be used in a certain way to symbolize his death. When he said, "*This* do in remembrance of me," he took unleavened bread and broke it and gave it to his disciples. Only unleavened bread would have been available in a Jewish house at the Passover. Leaven symbolized impurity and was not to be used in the bread of the Lamb's memorial. "Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." (1 Corinthians 5:6-7) It was only fitting that the bread used to symbolize Christ would contain no impurity.

He also took "fruit of the vine." To the Jew, this expression could only mean the juice of the grape. It is occasionally argued that watermelon juice, strawberry juice, *etc.* would qualify as "fruit of the vine." But Jesus' original hearers would have thought of nothing but the juice of the grape. The Greek word can only mean the juice of the grape. Literally, it says Jesus took "the fruit of the vineyard."

The unleavened bread represents his body, and the fruit of the vine represents his blood. "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it. For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (Matthew 26:26-29) Together they symbolize the loving, compassionate sacrifice that Jesus made for the sins of the world.

Often it is argued that what we use in the Lamb's memorial is not really important. We are told, "The elements do not matter so long as the heart is right." But if the heart is right we will not want to change what Christ said. Jesus did not say, "Do something in remembrance of me." He said, "*This* do in remembrance of me", and so eliminated everything else. If we change what he said, we are not doing "*this*" in the remembrance of him. We would be doing something else.

“This Do in Remembrance of Me”

“This *do* in remembrance of me” is a command, not a suggestion. The early church took it seriously. They refused to neglect it. Do we know how often they did it? If the Bible does not specify the frequency of the observance we could fulfill this command by doing it only once in our lifetime. So what does the Bible say about the frequency of the Lamb’s memorial? Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians that they were to do it “when ye come together therefore into one place.” (1 Corinthians 11:20) If the Bible contained nothing more on the matter, we would be free to make whatever decisions we wanted as to when and how often we partake of the Lord’s Supper. More information is given. We are told, “Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them.” (Acts 20:7) They did it on the first day of the week with Paul’s obvious approval. He saw no need to correct their practice in this matter. But did they do it every first day of the week? The Jews were told to, “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.” (Exodus 20:8) Did they observe every Sabbath day? Absolutely they did. If “Remember the Sabbath day” meant every Sabbath, then “the first day of the week” means every first day of the week. The early church observed it often enough to be said to be “steadfast” in doing it. (Acts 2:42)

History tells us the early church observed the Lamb’s memorial on the first day of every week. If they did it weekly, we must also do it weekly if we are to be like them. “This *do* in remembrance of me” meant weekly to them and should mean nothing less to us. Would monthly, quarterly, or annually be doing what they did? The apostles were there when Jesus said, “This *do* in remembrance of me,” and understood him to mean on the first day of every week. Surely we should be guided by the understanding of those to whom the instructions were originally given.

Why did Christ command this memorial? First, because it is good for us. The Lord’s Supper is not just some ancient tradition that has hung on through the years, but is a time of self-examination. It is a time at the beginning of each week when we are forced to take stock of our spirituality. “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.” (1 Corinthians 11:28-29) We are not examining ourselves to see if we are “worthy” to partake. This was not Paul’s instruction. No one would ever qualify if he had to be “worthy” to do it. Paul instructs to determine if we are partaking in a worthy manner. In other words, are our minds focused on Christ and his sacrifice, or are we habitually going through a ritual, giving no real thought to what we are doing?

Secondly, we are to do this as a sign of our fellowship with other Christians. “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the

body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.” (1 Corinthians 10:16-17) The Lord’s Supper is not a retreat into private meditation and relationship with God but a time of sharing with other Christians. We do it when “we come together,” and not privately at home if we can possibly assemble. It is a time of sharing with other Christians by remembering that event that is the basis of our common faith. We share with all Christians throughout the ages. The Lord’s Supper has been observed by God’s people for over one hundred thousand consecutive Sundays. We are in fellowship with Paul and the Christians at Troas who assembled two thousand years ago. We are also sharing with those generations yet to come. We are sharing with Christians today in nearly two hundred nations. Each week Christians all around this world remember Christ by doing the same thing in the same way because we serve the same Lord. We do it in a variety of languages and dialects, but it is the same memorial being observed. This binds us to every other Christian in God’s family. We share with those within our own congregation when we take time out of busy schedules to come together at the same time on the same day to do the same thing because we are saved by the same Lord. Sadly, it appears, the Corinthian church had lost the “communion” aspect of the Lord’s Supper. May we never make the same mistake.

“This Do in Remembrance of Me”

The human mind needs memorials to remember historical events. We mark great historical sights with monuments and statues. Washington D.C. is full of such designed to honor great Americans. They help us remember that others sacrificed to ensure that we can continue to enjoy our precious freedoms.

God understood our need for memorials. The Old Testament is filled with memorials built to remember various events. The Passover was to remind the Jews of God’s gracious sparing of the Israelite families when he destroyed the firstborn among the Egyptians. He instituted a Passover dinner of roast lamb and bitter herbs to remind Israel of their suffering in Egypt and how he had relieved it.

God also instituted a memorial for us. We build memorials out of iron or stone, and still they crumble and decay. God uses unleavened bread and fruit of the vine to make a permanent memorial that never decays, as long as it is done right. We are justifiably angered when we hear that someone has defaced a memorial. It just seems so disrespectful. What must be said about Christians who “deface” the Lamb’s memorial? The Corinthians had profaned the Lord’s Supper, and Paul rebuked them for it. He corrected their behavior by reminding them of the true significance of the memorial. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26) We must not forget what the memorial is about. Remembering the

true importance of the feast will reduce absenteeism. It will keep us from distracting others with disrespectful conversation. It will eliminate unnecessary trips out of the auditorium during this most solemn event. Let us always remember what Christ did.

“This Do in Remembrance of Me”

Remember the event! Remember the Christ! Remember the love shown!
Remember His sacrifice! Remember the pain and humiliation endured!
Remember the hope made possible!

Paul said that by observing the Lord's Supper we “show the Lord's death till he come.” (1 Corinthians 11:26) The word Paul uses for “show” is a form of the word “evangelize.” We do “evangelize” or proclaim the Lord's death until he come. The Lord's Supper is a living sermon, capable of being preached by any Christian. Our humble, obedient, and loving observance of this solemn memorial proclaims to those around us that we believe in Christ. As we partake of that which represents his body and blood, we are telling the world of that tremendous sacrifice made by Jesus. We show our willingness to continue to show this message in this manner “until he comes.” Every missed opportunity to partake of this feast is a missed opportunity to “preach” this wonderful sermon. We also see here another reason taking every precaution not to distract someone during this solemn observance. What if the preacher interrupted his sermon by conversing with someone in the audience about an issue that was totally separate and apart from the sermon? What if he walked out for a few minutes during the sermon? When you disrupt the Lord's Supper you are interrupting the proclamation Jesus' death. The way you conduct yourself during the Lamb's memorial shows others the seriousness you attribute to the occasion. We would be horrified if someone acted at the funeral of a beloved member of our family as some act during the Lord's Supper.

Conclusion

The Lamb's memorial expresses gratitude for his death and confidence in his return. It is too precious for the child of God to miss willingly. He plans his schedule so that he may participate in it. He gladly makes whatever effort is necessary to be present if at all possible. Paul “abode seven days” in Troas to be present with the saints on the first day of the week “to break bread.” (Acts 20:6-7) He seems to have done the same thing at Tyre (Acts 21:3-4) and Puteoli. (Acts 28:13-14) This memorial is the focal point of the Christian's week.

Do they have the Fourth of July in Great Britain? Of course they do. Just like here, it comes directly between July 3 and July 5. They just do not celebrate it. The day contains no special significance to them, but it is extremely important for Americans as the day on which we celebrate our independence. Could someone from Great Britain join in the festivities if they were visiting in America? Of course they could, but it would not have the significance for them that it does for us. In the same way an unbeliever might go through the motions of the Lord's Supper, but it could not possibly have the valued meaning for them that it does for the Christian who truly understands what he is commemorating.

We must never allow the Lamb's memorial to lose its true significance. It must never be relegated to a ceremonial ritual that is done merely out of habit. Let us never fail to "show the Lord's death until he come."

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Biography

Phil Grear was born in Parkersburg, WV and graduated from Parkersburg South High School. He graduated from Harding University in 1974 and has preached for churches in Sissonville, WV (1974-1976), Prosperity, WV (1976-1979), Farmington, WV (1979-1986), Cambridge, OH (1986-2000), and East High St. in Springfield, OH (2000-present), where he also serves as an elder.

Phil holds two gospel meetings per year and has made mission trips to Italy, Cuba, and Scotland. He is a staff writer for *West Virginia Christian* and associate editor of *Upon The Rock*. He is the author of a book entitled *Probing The Prophets*. He is on the Board of Directors of Midwestern Children's Home. He is also an instructor in the Central Ohio Bible Institute.

Phil has been married to his wife, Darleen, for thirty-two years, and they are the parents of two daughters, Amy Andrick of Galloway, OH, and Katie Gilchrist of Massillon, OH. Amy's husband, Luke, is a computer technician. Katie's husband, Jack, preaches for the church in Massillon, OH. Phil and Darleen have two granddaughters, Joanna and Emily Andrick.

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED BY THE LAMB?

Neal Pollard

The book of John opens with the harbinger pointing to Jesus and affirming that He was the Lamb who would take away the sin of the world (John 1:29). This was John's repeated sermon (cf. John 1:36). To this end, the Lamb was slain (cf. Revelation 5:12). Later in the final book of Scripture, John reveals what the Lamb will do to those who fail to accept His salvation in life (cf. Revelation 6:16). Still later, mention is made of certain who had persevered and had washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14ff).

Drawing off of the all-important, Old Testament imagery of the Passover Lamb ordered slain by every Israelite family and whose blood each household was to sprinkle on the doorpost on the night of the tenth plague, this lamb was a type of the coming Christ. W. Gaddys Roy, in his book *Types And Shadows*, shows the many parallels in this typology:

1. As the lamb was without blemish (Ex. 12:5), Christ was without sin (Heb. 4:15).
2. The lamb was offered in the vigor of life (Ex. 12:5); So was Christ.
3. The lamb was to be the best of the flock (Ex. 12:5); Jesus was from heaven, the Son of God (Jn. 3:16; etc.).
4. The lamb was sacrificed before salvation in Israel (Ex. 12:5-13); Jesus died before man could be saved (Lk. 23:44-46; etc.).
5. Lamb's blood was sprinkled (Ex. 12:7); the blood of Christ is sprinkled on the heart (Heb. 12:22-24).
6. Lamb was separated from the flock (Ex. 12:5,6); Christ was separated from sinners (Heb. 7:26).
7. No bone of the lamb was to be broken (Ex. 12:9); So, with Christ (Jn. 19:32ff).
8. Lamb must be eaten (Ex. 12:8); Christ is the bread of life (Jn. 6:51).
9. The lamb was eaten with bitter herbs and unleavened bread (Ex. 12:8); We must accept Christ with sacrifice and sincerity of heart (Mt. 16:24; etc.) (adapted, 45-48).

The Bible clearly shows that salvation comes from the Lamb. Hebrews is but one of the books written with this theme. The whole concept of the High Priest, the blood, the sacrifice, and covenant accentuates the theme of Jesus as the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (cf. John 1:29). As one considers what was done to be saved by the lamb offered the night of the tenth plague, reflect upon the question, “What must I do to be saved by the Lamb?”

Accept the Sacrifice (Exodus 12:3-5)

For Israel, this meant accepting the terms of the sacrifice, too. They were to take a lamb for themselves on a specific day of a specific kind and offer him at a specified time. By doing this, they understood that the Lord would not visit their houses with death (cf. 12:29) that they “may understand how the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel” (11:7b).

Today, one must accept the sacrifice. Salvation is through no other means than Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12; John 14:6), the one chosen of God to be the sacrifice for man’s sins. Yet, to accept the sacrifice means to accept the terms of the sacrifice. One must be willing to obey all that He commands one do in order to accept the sacrifice made. Accepting Jesus means obeying Him (John 14:15; Hebrews 5:9). It means following Him. It means believing that He is God’s answer to man’s sin problem (John 8:24). Such faith in and acceptance of God’s gracious gift will invariably impact the heart, leading to repentance (cf. Romans 2:4). Such a good, honest, and accepting condition of heart also leads to confessing that faith in Jesus as the Lamb (Romans 10:9-10). Rejecting Jesus as the solution to one’s sin problem, rejecting the need for such atonement, or placing trust elsewhere causes one to be as lost as the poor firstborns in Egypt that fateful night, though the loss is greater than mere physical death.

Apply the Blood (Exodus 12:7,13)

Israel’s redemption and escape from loss required more than mere assent and acknowledgement of God’s provision. They had to personally care for that unblemished lamb or goat for four days (cf. Exodus 12:6), then slaughter the creature. Consider for a moment the potential sacrifice the killing of an animal you had cared for would bring. Exodus 12:7 says, “Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it.” When the Lord saw the blood, it was then He passed over that house.

To be saved by the Lamb, one must apply His blood to their sins. Sadly, the religious world cannot seem to see the significance or way of this process. With regard to acceptance of the Lamb, Christendom is almost universally

agreed. Yet, as to how the benefits of His blood are obtained, almost no one teaches.

Consider some immutable facts about the blood of Christ. First, Jesus says His blood is shed for the remission of sins (Matthew 26:28). Later, Paul teaches that the blood of Christ brings redemption and forgiveness (Colossians 1:14). Then, John begins the last book of the Bible with these words of praise: “And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood...” (Revelation 1:5). The blood of the Lamb remits, redeems from, forgives, and washes from sins! That is plain, biblical truth.

Now, consider some equally immutable facts about water baptism submitted to by accountable persons with faith in Christ who repent of sin. First, Peter preaches in the first gospel sermon that his hearers needed to repent and be baptized for *the remission of sins* (Acts 2:38; cf. Matthew 26:28). In the gospels preceding Acts and the epistles following it, there are clear statements showing that those who in faith are baptized find *redemption and forgiveness*. Jesus said, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). Scriptural baptism is the act that puts one in Christ (Galatians 3:27), *in whom we have redemption* (Colossians 1:14; Ephesians 1:7). Peter’s statement is simply, “...baptism doth also now save us” (1 Peter 3:21). Then, Saul of Tarsus was told by Ananias to arise and be baptized and *wash away* his sins (Acts 22:16; cf. Revelation 1:5). A pattern is clearly seen in these scriptures. When a believer repents and is baptized, baptism remits, redeems from, forgives, and washes from sins! That is plain, biblical truth. What the blood is said to do, baptism does. The inescapable conclusion is that one contacts the blood of Christ by faith in the act of baptism.

Keep the Memorial (Exodus 12:14)

One version says, “This is a day you are to commemorate ...” The Passover remained a high and holy day on the Israelite calendar so long as the Old Covenant was in effect. The Jews did not always faithfully observe it (2 Kings 23:21ff), but it was always preeminently important in the mind of God as He knew it would serve as a reminder of the people in their dependence upon God to deliver them (Exodus 12:14). One subject to the Old Law could not observe the Jewish Passover conscientiously and earnestly without being drawn closer to God. Thus, the memorial was a relationship builder between God and His covenanted people.

Today, to be saved by the Lamb one must continue to walk in the light of the Lamb to have the cleansing power of the blood continually applied (1 John 1:7). Walking in the light transcends mere, platitudinous phraseology. It is no

mere cliché. The Lord has put into place ways that we can walk in the light and thus keep faithful to Him. The memorial of the Lord's Supper is a vital way. Each Sunday (cf. Acts 20:7), one has the privilege of gathering at the table to revisit the significance of Calvary. The cross was where the Lamb was slain as a substitute sacrifice for our sins. When one chooses to miss this memorial, there is spiritual trouble in his or her life. One is thereby severing himself or herself from the commanded commemoration (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:23-29). God has also placed such commands as corporate worship (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Acts 2:42ff; Hebrews 10:25) as a means of keeping us in the light. Daily consecration, study and prayer, helps stave off the darkness of the devil (1 Thessalonians 5:17; Psalm 1). Faithful following of Christ's example and teaching on matters of morality and conduct keep one in the light. The one that endures to the end, the same shall be saved (Matthew 10:22).

The Lamb wants to save us! He has given Himself to help make such a reality. Yet, the Lamb requires each individual to respond to that transcendent love in faithful obedience (Hebrews 5:9).

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Biography

Neal Pollard is a native of Mississippi (2/6/70). Began preaching in 1987. Educated at Faulkner University, Freed-Hardeman University, and Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver. Local work in Alabama and Virginia. Since 1994 has been with the Cold Harbor Road church in Mechanicsville, VA. Founding director of Cold Harbor Road Lectureship, begun in 1997. Former and founding editor of *Glad Tidings* (1992-2001). His writings have appeared in numerous brotherhood publications. Has preached in gospel efforts (lectureships, gospel meetings, youth rallies, marriage and education seminars, etc.) in 20 states, Tanzania, and Ukraine. Speaker for "Gods Wonderful Word" TV Program, airing in OR, VA, and WA (at least at one time in NC). Kathleen and Neal have three sons (Gary III, Dale, and Carl). Father (Gary, Sr., FHU '64), brother (Brent, Elizabethtown, NC), brother-in-law (James Woodall, Vinita, OK), and many other relatives are gospel preachers.

CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

Johnny Ramsey

Nearly everyone will agree that Christ is essential to our salvation. This is a universal belief. But when we ask the question “Is the church essential to our salvation?” we get this answer “Of course not!” I feel confident that most of you believe that Christ is necessary to your salvation but that the church plays no vital part in your soul’s destiny. In other words, to your thinking, membership in the church is not of any eternal value. In this brief lesson, I wish to affirm that both *Christ* and the *church* are essential to our salvation. Please follow the lesson closely with your Bible open.

If we but realize the close relationship between Christ and the church, we would never be guilty of saying “I can be saved without ever being a member of the church.” Notice the wording of the following passage of Scripture. Paul, inspired by God, wrote to the church in Ephesians 5:22-23:

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.”

From this beautiful passage we notice that the church is referred to as the bride of Christ. This teaching certainly depicts the close affinity between the Lord and the church. To belong to Christ is to belong to the church! Paul stated that Christ would sanctify, cleanse, and present the church to Himself. The record also states that Christ gave Himself for the church. I ask this pertinent question: “Did our Lord suffer the agony of death to bring into

existence a non-essential institution?” Did the Son of God offer Himself on the Roman Cross—the most shameful death known to man—in order to present something that we could either take or leave, accept or reject? In the book of Acts, chapter 20, verse 28, we hear the Apostle Paul as he speaks fervently to the elders of the church in Ephesus: “Take heed unto yourselves and all the flock, over which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of the Lord which he hath purchased with his own blood.” Did Jesus shed His blood in vain? This scripture teaches that the church was bought with Christ’s blood. By the standards of fair trade exchange, we learn that anything purchased should be worth the value of the price paid. The price paid for the church was the blood of Christ. Therefore, if the purchase price equals the value of the purchased possession, the church is just as important to our salvation as Christ’s precious blood. Who then will deny that the church is essential? Is Christ’s blood essential? Only the atheist, skeptic, and modernist will say no!

In Matthew 26:28 we read that Jesus shed His blood for the remission of sins. So, we learn that Christ shed His blood for two reasons: (1) To purchase the church (Acts 20:28) and (2) For the remission of sins (Matthew 26:28). There is, therefore, an unmistakable relationship between salvation from sin and the church. In Acts, the second chapter, we read of those who received remission of sins by repenting and being baptized into Christ (Acts 2:38) and then the divine record states, “And the Lord added to the church daily such as were being saved” (Acts 2:47). These Jews on the Day of Pentecost benefited by the blood, by being in what the blood bought, that is, the church. Perhaps this illustration will help. Let us suppose that it is the coldest day of the year. You pass by a street corner and see a young boy standing there in thin, scanty clothing. His teeth are chattering, and he is turning purple because of the freezing weather. You have compassion on him and hand him 50 dollars, saying, “Son, go over there to that clothing store and buy yourself some clothes, before you freeze to death.” He gratefully accepts the money for the clothing and heads for the store as you depart. Two hours later you pass the same corner. Much to your surprise, the boy still stands there—still in his inadequate clothing—icicles in his hair—piled up high by his side you see 50 dollars worth of warm clothing. He is none the better in spite of your generosity for he failed to realize that he would only profit by being in the clothing your money had purchased. You had given him that money to provide *warmth* and *clothing*. The boy’s only hope for getting warm was to get in the clothing. Let us apply the principle to our lesson. Christ shed his blood for the remission of sins (Matthew 26:28; Ephesians 1:7) and to purchase the church; we benefit from His blood by being in the church or the purchased possession.

The book of Acts furnishes us with another example of the close tie between the church and Christ. In Acts, chapter 8, we read that Saul of Tarsus, a leader of the Pharisees, “made havoc of the church.” Yes, he led the persecution against the church (Acts 8:1). But, in Acts, chapter 9, verse 4,

Jesus asked him: “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” Can’t you see, my friends, from this example, that to persecute the church is to persecute Christ? Why? Christ and the church are one, just as the husband and wife (Ephesians 5:32).

From Colossians 1:18 and 24 we learn another lesson concerning the intimate connection between Christ and the church. Listen to these words of inspiration: “And he (Christ) is the head of the body the church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.” Paul further stated, “Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh—for his body’s sake, which is the church.” We learn from these words to the church at Colosse that the church is the spiritual body of Christ over which He rules as head. Therefore, to try to be saved by Christ but apart from the church is to separate the head from the body—and this, of course, would destroy both. The very fact that the Bible teaches us that Christ is the head of the church, which is His body, proves conclusively that the church is essential. Can you visualize the perfect Son of God as the head of a non-essential. Can you visualize the perfect Son of God as the head of a non-essential organism? The New Testament teaches no such thing. Also, in this regard, in writing to the church at Ephesus the Apostle stated that we are reconciled or brought back on friendly terms with God, only in the body, the church. Now, ask yourself the question: “Is the church essential?”

Another striking point concerning Christ and His church or His body (Ephesians 1:20; 23) is found in Ephesians 5:23: “for the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church and he is the savior of the body.” Friends, if you think the church is non-essential, you will have to get another Savior—for, Christ is the Savior of the body over which He rules as head, that is, the church. The New Testament teaches that Christ gave Himself for the church, shed His blood to purchase it, that He rules over it as its head and He will save the church one day.

Are you a member of the church that Jesus built? Friend of mine, I am not speaking of the man-made churches but of the body of Christ. You and I must be Christians, members of the Lord’s body, in order to be saved.

The Church of Christ is Distinctive!

As one travels over the busy roadways in America and throughout the world, he is made aware of the diversity of religious beliefs, the division within the realm of spiritual matters. A few years ago I heard a noted international evangelist say that there were 800 different churches in the earth today! Twenty years ago a leading publisher in the United States issued a book listing 254 denominations in North America. Is this the epitome of what Jesus died for? No, it is directly opposed to His prayer for oneness in Christianity (John

17:20-21). The apostle Paul condemned such schism as carnal (I Corinthians 1:10). In Ephesians 4:1-6 we have a divine platform for unity as the Holy Spirit desires it to be. It is significant that our Lord promised to build but *one* spiritual body or organism (Matthew 16:18). In the first century Paul, Peter, James, John, Philip, and Stephen were all members of the same church—the one Christ purchased with His precious blood (Acts 20:18). It was distinct and unique then; the Lord’s church is even so today!

There is no merit in being unusual just for the purpose of being odd; but, the church of Christ is distinctive because it follows the Bible only as its guide. This makes the organization, doctrine, worship, and life of the church unique in the maze of religious confusion.

Since the church is referred to over 500 times in the New Testament, heaven must be concerned and vitally interested in the religion of Christ. We read in Ephesians, chapter five, that the church is subject to Christ—not to the Pope, a synod or a creed book—but only to the Lord. His very truth contributes greatly to the distinctiveness of Christ’s church. In Ephesians 3:21 we learn that God is glorified “in the church” both now and eternally. Thus our present study is certainly incomparable in its worth.

Wherever men today obey the Scriptures explicitly, the Lord’s church exists. If we do what men did in the first century, under the instructions of the Scriptures, we will be exactly what they were. They were Christians (I Peter 4:16); they were members of the church of Christ! (Romans 16:16).

Another rebuttal is often stated in these words: “Too many years have elapsed since the establishment of pure Christianity. The Dark Ages resulted in the loss of divine truth. We can no longer be just Christians. We will have to be a member of some denomination today.” Multiplied thousands adhere to such reasoning. But, is it true? Jehovah promised that His word would not return void (Isaiah 55:11) and that the inspired Scriptures would make men spiritually complete (II Timothy 3:16-17). It therefore becomes a strange idea to believe that God would allow the devil to triumph over divine truth so as to pervert the plan of redemption for man. Among those who profess to follow the Bible, this position is, in fact, untenable. We *can be today* what servants of Jesus *were* over 1900 years ago. The intervening years have not hidden the power of the gospel. It is still the same message of salvation (Romans 1:16).

Let us illustrate the plausible nature of what we are saying. Suppose that the game of baseball would cease to be played for several centuries. If, in the year 2550, a man were to follow minutely the baseball rule book of 1968, he could present to the people of his day the exact game we play now. The elapse of time could not change the matter. Friends, the same principle applies to Christianity. If we obey and teach and practice that religion portrayed on the pages of the New Testament, we shall be members of the church.

The church which Jesus purchased with His own blood does not consist of all the denominations. New Testament Christianity is un-denominational. The body of Christ is not composed of the 300 differing religious bodies on earth today.

But someone says “Preacher, have you never read the passage in John, chapter 15, concerning the vine and the branches? Don’t you know that Jesus was referring to the various denominations when he said “I am the vine and ye are the branches?”

No, I *do not believe* Christ was referring to the various denominations when He said: “Ye are the branches.” Here are four conclusive reasons why we say this so emphatically.

First of all, Jesus made it plain that He was referring to an individual and not a denomination when He spoke of the branches of the vine. Notice verses 1 through 7 of John, chapter 15:

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

The very context itself disproves the theory put forth by the denominations. Jesus was saying: I am the vine, ye (my disciples) are the branches. He said “If a *man* abide not ... as a branch.”

John 15 does not prove that Christ was sanctioning the present division in the religious world when He stated “I am the vine and ye are the branches” because none of the denominations of today existed then. He could not have referred to the Protestant bodies for not one of them was in existence until 1519.

I am also sure Jesus was not upholding sectarianism by His use of “the vine and the branches” because *a vine bears only one type of fruit*. If Christ had wanted to uphold denominationalism He would have needed another

comparison for a vine can bear but one type of fruit. The fruit of the denominations has produced many, many varying religious orders. It would be just as logical to see a vine with grapes, bananas, apples, plums, and peaches on each of the branches as to believe that Christ was referring to the denominations when He said "I am the vine and ye are the branches." Last of all, we are confident Jesus was not herein endorsing religious divisions because just two chapters later He prayed for oneness and not diversity (John 17:20-21). Surely, Jesus did not contradict His teaching in His prayer life.

I beg of you to seriously consider the importance of being a member of the body of Christ. In Galatians 3:27 and I Corinthians 12:13 we read that to become a part of Christ's church we must be baptized for the remission of sins. When we do this, God will add us to the church (Acts 2:47) where we can serve the Lord faithfully until death and then go home to Heaven in the after-awhile.

What the Church is not!

Many people have an unscriptural idea concerning the church. For instance, most people speak of a material building as the church. You ask 10 people on the street "What is the church?" and most of them will point to a building with stained glass windows and a steeple projected in the sky. To a lot of people this is the church. No such idea prevailed in New Testament days. Jesus did not shed His blood to purchase a building composed of brick, mortar and stone. Unless we have a fuller concept of the Lord's church than to liken it to a literal meeting house then we have missed the true meaning of the church that Jesus built. The church is spoken of as the house of God (I Timothy 3:15). Peter tells us in I Peter 2:5 that Christians are living stones which make up the house of God or the church of the Lord. To Christians at Corinth Paul stated "Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular." (I Corinthians 12:27). Thus far we have established that the church is *not* a building. Such expressions, then, as "Go to church," "What a beautiful church," "They are building a new church," and many others express a lack of Bible teaching on the nature of the church that Jesus built.

In discussing what the church is not, I would like to further state that it is not a social club. Thousands of people think of the church as a glorified social center. It is true that many of the denominations started by men using the social element to thrive on—but remember, our lesson deals with the church Jesus built and not some manmade religious order. Such things as bridge parties, pie suppers, bingo games, white elephant sales, and rummage sales sponsored by the church would be as foreign to the New Testament Christians as for us today to see an Eskimo wearing a Panama hat! In some religious groups the most successful preachers are not noted for their gospel preaching but for their ability to plan and supervise social affairs. The church of the Lord never has been in the business of providing entertainment or developing the appetite. The gospel story is designed for men's souls and not

their stomachs. Today some build huge cathedrals and use them once or twice a week for spiritual matters and then will use this same building purchased with what is called “the Lord’s money” for such things as card parties, pie suppers, and even *dances* in some places. I challenge every preacher on earth to show me one scripture that even remotely gives us the right to use the Lord’s money for such things. If we’d leave the kitchens, banquet rooms, and dance halls out of the church buildings and use that money to preach the pure gospel of Christ the Lord would be pleased, instead of humiliated by our actions. The church Christ established is not a denomination. Were the early Christians (such as Paul, Stephen, Philip, and John) in the world today no denomination could claim them, for they labored for the Lord as faithful members of His church long before any of the so-called “Christian” denominations came into existence. They were simply members of the body of Christ—humble Christians—and had absolutely no affiliation with denominationalism. The church Jesus purchased was not a denomination.

In discussing what the church is not, we need to mention that Jesus never did intend for His church to be political power. The Lord didn’t intend for the principles of Christianity to be a mixture of “church and state.” His kingdom is a spiritual reign in the hearts and lives of men and not a political regime. In John 18:36 we have these words of Christ recorded: “My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight.” To the brethren at Corinth, Paul was inspired to write: “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal” (II Corinthians 10:3-4). The only weapon we are to use as members of the Lord’s army—His church—is the sword of the spirit, the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17). Christians are taught not to use *force* but *love* in overcoming the enemies of righteousness. But you can read in any reputable history of an apostate religion, which claims to be the original church, which sent its members on a series of murdering escapades—known by us today as the *Crusades* and the *Inquisition*. As we study the nature of the church that Jesus established we see plainly that He never intended for it to be a political system. Preaching brethren, let’s keep politics out of the pulpit and tell sinners of the King of Kings!

A Christ-centered Church

What makes a church great? There are those in the world who appraise spiritual greatness in the light of material accomplishment. Even some brethren are prone to equate importance with numbers, money, and propaganda. But, the Bible is careful to tell us the traits of a truly great church. A church cannot be great unless:

1. The Lord Built It: Psalms 127:1; Matthew 16:18
2. Christ Is The Head: Colossians 1:18
3. And The Foundation: I Corinthians 3:11
4. He Must Be The Cornerstone: Ephesians 2:20

5. Christ Purchases It: Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:23
6. It Follows The Divine Pattern: Hebrews 8:1-5

It is apparent, today, that among those congregations belonging to Christ, some are not accomplishing what they ought. Why? One reason is we have almost overstressed individual responsibility and have overlooked Biblical injunctions that demand congregational oneness and action. For instance, the Scriptures refer to the church as the

1. Army of the Lord: Ephesians 6:10-17
2. Body of Christ: I Corinthians 12
3. Bride of Christ: Ephesians 5
4. Family of God: Hebrews 3; Ephesians 3; I Timothy 3:15
5. Kingdom of the Lord: Hebrews 12:28

All of these comparisons speak of the concord we must have in the Lord's church which glorifies the Savior. The church will never be truly great until every member works together. We need the sentiment expressed in Acts 4:32 to prevail in our midst today: "and the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul." We must "strive together for the faith of the gospel" (Philippians 1:27). Paul exhorted the Corinthians to "be of the same mind and live in peace" (II Corinthians 13:11). A church that has "fervent love among themselves" (I Peter 4:8) can accomplish much for Jesus. Yes, a congregation of the Lord's people working together as these passages urge would be indeed unusual, different, and great! Wouldn't it be marvelous if every member were 100% loyal instead of 30%? If each one attended each assembly of study and worship? If each Christian gave so liberally that the tremendous work of evangelism and benevolence could be put into action? Yes, if every member of the body of Christ loved the Lord and one another thoroughly, we would soon see a world redeemed. But, alas the following words truly depict the problem: "Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some unto honor, and some unto dishonor" (II Timothy 2:20).

The honorable vessels form churches that are Christ centered. Let us notice five necessary ingredients in a Christ-centered church.

Such a congregation must first of all be

Converted

The word means "change in character, spiritual change, transformed, to have a different purpose." Yes, conversion applies after becoming a Christian, too! The church of Ephesus was gold by the Lord to be transformed (Revelation 2:40). So was the congregation in Sardis (Revelation 3:5). In II Corinthians 5:17 we learn of the converted life each member of the church is to live.

A Christ-centered church must also be

Convicted

Webster tells us that this word means “a state of being convinced, a fixed or firm belief; a deep persuasion.” The opposite idea would be doubt or uncertainty. In Revelation 11 we learn that no compromise among God’s people is tolerated. Christians today need to have the backbone manifested long ago by Daniel and his friends. We desperately need churches that stand for the right thing—if needs be against all odds. We just cannot please men and yet be the servants of Christ (Galatians 1:10). We need some rock-ribbed conviction in the church today. The language of II Corinthians 4 is very appropriate: We also believe and therefore we speak.” When the love of Christ constrains us we shall persuade men (II Corinthians 5:11-14). How this attribute is needed today in God’s family!

A Christ-centered church is

Compassionate

A root word here is “compass”—to see all around our neighbors' needs. An old Indian proverb said “I’ll not criticize my brother till I’ve walked in his moccasins for two weeks.” To be compassionate means “to have pity, to be merciful, to be interested in the needs of others.” Certainly, a church that is Christ-centered has **concern** for the lost of the world everywhere. The churches in Jerusalem, Antioch, Thessalonica, and Philippi were all great in their concern for others. Our spirit needs to stir within us (Acts 17:16) as we realize millions yet remain untaught.

A great church of the Lord must also be

Constant

This involves “firmness, fortitude, faithfulness, regularity, steadfastness and loyalty.” The church in Philippi was told “to stand fast in the Lord.” The one in Corinth was admonished to “always abound in the work of the Lord.” The church in Ephesus was exhorted to “be strong in the Lord and the power of His might.” We should be constant, as God’s people, in praising Him continually (Hebrews 13:15), in beseeching Him fervently (Colossians 4:2), and in bearing the Spirit’s fruit (John 15:8-9; Galatians 5:22-23).

Last of all, a Christ-centered church is

Conversant

This word means “familiar by use or study, having frequent conversation, intimately associated, well acquainted and informed.” The lesson is obvious! A church cannot be great in the sight of Heaven if Heaven is out of sight! A church centered on Christ meditates day and night in Jehovah’s law. Its members pray without ceasing. They are made glad to assemble for worship. Christ lives within the membership of such a church. As one man such a congregation sings

“O the pure delight of a single hour
That before thy throne I spend,
When I kneel in prayer
And with Thee my God
We commune as friend with friend.”

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BECAUSE HE LIVES!

Charles C. Pugh III

Dear Joe:

I cannot tell you how shocked I was to learn about your terrible loss. In one breathtaking, heartbreaking instant he left us, without warning or farewell. In one mind-numbing moment he vanished from our midst. In a trance, we lowered his beloved body. . . In total wonderment, we heard friends and family discuss him in the past tense. In a haze of horror, our thoughts came to grips with our feelings: We will never see him again in this world, his smile will never cheer our spirits one last time, his tenderness will never again touch our souls. . .

At a fundamental level, death is the dark shadow hanging over every human thought, choice, plan and action, seeming to rob them of ultimate meaning and value. I know that you believe we humans have come from nowhere and from nothing and are likewise destined to return nowhere, become nothing; that all we have achieved and become will be lost forever when we die so that it will be as if we had never been.

In contrast. . .I hold that human life does have an ultimate purpose, meaning and significance, and that the true “end” of Homo sapiens. . .is union with the Ultimate Reality. We do not come from nowhere and nothing and return nowhere to nothing. . . (Varghese xi-xii).

The contrast seen in the above words is a contrast between two fundamental views concerning life and death. It is a contrast between (1) the origin of life, (2) the purpose of life, and (3) the end of life. One view is “humans have come from nowhere and from nothing and are likewise destined to return to nowhere, become nothing” (xi). The other view is “that human life does have an ultimate purpose. . .and that the true ‘end’ of Homo sapiens. . .is union with the Ultimate Reality” (*i.e.* God) (xii).

The late Thomas B. Warren addressed the significance of these issues in his book, *Immortality-All of Us Will Be Somewhere Forever*, when he wrote:

Down through the centuries men have asked themselves these very intriguing questions: “Will physical death be the end of me? After physical death, will I live on as a unique center of consciousness? If there is to be persistence of personality after physical death, will such persistence be the case for each and every human being? Or, will it be for only some of the totality of human beings who will have lived on earth

(during *all* of its existence)? If such is to be the case for only *some*—but *not all*—human beings, which ones will it be? Will only those who, during their earthly lives have been *righteous* (faithful to God) live eternally as unique centers of consciousness? Or, will *every* person who has ever lived on earth be resurrected, to live on forever?”

Thus, the *basic*—the “bed-rock,” fundamental—concern. . . is to deal with this question: “Will every human being who has ever lived on the earth live on—*after physical death*—as a unique center of conscious (human) personality?” (It would be difficult to imagine a more important problem for any human being.) (vii).

Christianity brings these matters into sharp focus, in general, through the doctrine of the resurrection of the body and, in particular, through the historical fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this presentation, my purpose is not to set forth the evidence that proves the truth of the proposition: **Jesus Christ rose bodily from the dead.** (See list of works at the end of this article.) The propositions affirmed by Christianity are *certain* and *secure* (cf. Pugh 25). Luke affirmed “the certainty of those things” that “are most surely believed among us” (Luke 1:1-4) a part of which is the proposition that “He. . . is risen!” (Luke 24:6). Peter declared, “This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses” (Acts 2:32). The truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is presupposed in this presentation. My purpose is, given the truth of the resurrection, to ask and answer the following question: **What are the implications of the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth?**

When John received The Revelation of Jesus Christ when he (John) was in tribulation on the island of Patmos, he “fell at Jesus’ feet as a dead man and Jesus said, ‘Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen’” (Rev. 1:17-18). Prior to this, John had heard Jesus say, “A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. **Because I live**, you will live also” (John 14:19, emp. added). What are some of the implications of “Because He lives?”

Deity is Provable

There are various theistic arguments (*i.e.* arguments that prove the existence of God). However, it is the case that in one sense, as Warren stated in his 1978 debate on the existence of God with Professor Matson, there is *one* basic argument for God. He said:

Basically there is really *one argument* for God. . . Basically one argument, but it can be subsumed under these two general headings: “general” revelation and “special” revelation. Under “general” revelation, the *world*,. . . *the physical universe in its entirety*, or *man*. Or “special” revelation, the *Bible*, the sacred Scriptures, which—among other things—

reveal *Jesus Christ*. . . There are multiplied thousands, perhaps millions upon millions of evidences that we could use in proof of God. . . We could prove the Bible to be the word of God. We could prove that the Bible itself, simply as a phenomenon, proves the existence of God (*Debate* 193, 274).

There is a sense in which it can be said that, ultimately, the greatest evidence there is for God is Jesus Christ, His Son. This is the case because God's revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ, is *personal, complete, and final*. Jesus came that we might know "**the only true God**" (John 17:3, emp. added). The proof of God through the Person and Work of Jesus can be called the **Christological** argument. The evidence of God in Christ is a *special* revelation of God not found in the arguments of *general* revelation (*i.e.* cosmological, teleological, and moral). General revelation is sufficient to prove the existence of God (cf. Rom. 1:20). However, general revelation is limited. In the Person and Work of Jesus Christ there is available the most awesome revelation of God. Peter implied the evidence that proves the deity of Jesus Christ (*i.e.* His resurrection) proves God. He wrote ". . . **[T]hrough Him [you] believe in God** who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God" (1 Pet. 1:20-21, emp. added).

Because He lives, having overcome death and the grave, I know that He is the Son of God (cf. Rom. 1:4). And because He is the Son of God, I know that God exists. Jesus Christ makes one "very sure of God" (Lewis 61).

Salvation is Actual

Paul wrote, "And **if Christ is not risen**, your faith is futile; **you are** still *in your sins*" (1 Cor. 15:17, emp. added). Such would be the case because a dead "savior" could not save. However, if "Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more" (Rom. 6:9) then one can know He is alive and, being alive, He can save. The writer of *The Epistle to the Hebrews* made this argument in the following:

And there were many priests (*i.e.* priests under the Old Testament system) because they were prevented by death from continuing. But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore **He is** also **able to save** to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, **since He ever lives to make intercession** for them (Heb. 7:23-25, emp. added).

Strength is Available

Paul wrote, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philip. 4:13). He strengthens because He lives and is available to help us. The

Scripture says, “It is Christ who died and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us” (Rom. 8:34). As Paul neared the end of his life on Earth (cf. 2 Tim. 4:6), he recalled, “At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. But **the Lord stood with me and strengthened me**, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!” (2 Tim. 4:16-18, emp. added). The details concerning how He strengthened Paul, and will strengthen us, are not provided. We do not believe it was (is) miraculous or sensory, or that this strength is received separate and apart from the word of God, but *in conjunction with the word*. The truth implied is that **He is able to strengthen us** as we face life’s challenges **because He lives!**

Immortality is Attainable

Long ago, Job asked, “If a man die, shall he live again?” (Job 14:14). In a previously cited book on these crucial matters, Warren wrote the following:

... [T]here is a sense in which every person is “immortal” from the moment of conception. This is the case because the soul of a person does not die when his physical body dies (Matt. 10:28). Thus, there is a sense in which one might use the word “immortal” to refer even to wicked men. This is the case because there will never be an end to any human being (no human being—not even the grossly wicked ones—will ever cease to exist). Jesus brought life and immortality to light (II Tim. 1:10) in explaining that the *soul*—while subject to spiritual death—is not subject to the same death as is the *body*. It was in explaining that the soul (in contrast to the mortality of the body) is not subject to the same death as is the body that Jesus brought life and immortality to light (II Tim. 1:10). *This truth was enhanced by His own resurrection from the dead (Immortality 235-36).*

Jesus made it clear that, although one’s body is mortal and thus will die (even as His did), the soul is immortal and not subject to the same death. By His resurrection, He has provided the assurance that it is possible that the corruptible and mortal body that dies at physical death can “put on incorruption. . .[and] put on immortality” (1 Cor. 15:53-54) and be resurrected thusly. Paul affirmed confidently, “For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Cor. 5:1). Parallel to this is Paul’s affirmation in the following: “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it

may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself (Philip. 3:20-21).

He said, “. . . Because I live, you will live also” (John 14:19). Hardeman summed it up eloquently when he said, “He plucked the rose of immortality from the realm of the dead and planted it to blossom and to bloom on the bosom of His own grave, thus giving hope and joy to mankind” (40).

Judgment is Knowable

Because He lives, there is assurance of *the* day of judgment. In the great presentation in which he defended the existence of the one true God before Athenian philosophers, Paul declared, “He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. **He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead**” (Acts 17:31, emp. added). Because He lives, I know there will be the judgment day. “For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living. . . For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. . . So then each of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom. 14:9-10, 12).

Reunion is Foreseeable

The New Testament provides the basis for a grand and glorious reunion of all saints. This is provided through the historical fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will 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. Therefore comfort one another with these words (1 Thess. 4:14-18).

The Bible says, “And if Christ is not risen. . . Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished” (1 Cor. 15:17-18). However, it is false that those who have fallen asleep (*i.e.* died in Christ) have perished. Therefore, it is false that Christ is not risen. He lives! And, because He lives, we have hope of being reunited with all of those who have named Him (cf. 2 Tim. 2:19).

Life is Hopeful

Finally, because He lives, the faithful Christian has a living hope. Peter wrote of our hope in Christ, and the foundation of this hope, which is His resurrection. He said, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you. . .” (1 Pet. 1:3-4).

If He is not alive (*i.e.* He is not risen), then “in this life only we have hope in Christ” and ‘we are of all men the most pitiable” (1 Cor. 15:19). If Jesus is in the grave, then nothing matters. If He is not in the grave, then nothing else matters! Life without hope is doom and gloom. Unbelief, which seeks to rob man of his hope in Christ, provides nothing in return in the way of substantial joy. Trueblood stated: “Unbelief does not necessarily make men bad, but, if they are wise, it makes them *sad*. Bertrand Russell, . . . however strange some of his conclusions may be, understands perfectly that the situation he faces, with no hope of immortality, is not one to make men laugh and sing” (293).

In an old book authored by William Jennings Bryan and titled, *Seven Questions in Dispute*, there is a chapter on “The Bodily Resurrection of Jesus.” Immediately preceding the chapter (as is the case with each of the seven chapters) there is a picture that illustrates the meaning of the chapter. In the chapter on the resurrection the picture is captioned “The Comfort of the Scriptures.” The picture is that of an old man and woman seated at a table. The man, who is blind, is resting his hands on his cane while he stares sightlessly into the distance. He is seated beside the old woman, his wife, who is reading from an open Bible. From the lips of the old man come the words: “Read that again, mother, where it says: ‘I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die’ ” (86).

In spite of life’s setbacks, reversals, difficulties, heartaches, discouragements, and depression, in Jesus Christ, life is ultimately hopeful because of the Gospel (good news). Across the shores of time, the voice of Him who is our hope of glory (Col. 1:27) speaks words that have the power to forever heal our broken hearts, calm our apprehensive souls, wipe away our blinding tears, relieve our pains, quell our doubts, and give us the hope of life forevermore. He said, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death” (Rev. 1:17-18).

Conclusion

Because He lives (1) Deity (God's existence) is provable, (2) salvation from sin is actual, (3) strength is available, (4) immortality is attainable, (5) judgment is knowable, (6) reunion of the people of God is foreseeable and (7) life on Earth is hopeful. As William Gaither has beautifully composed in his song, "Because He Lives:"

God sent His son, They called Him Jesus.
He came to love heal and forgive;
He lived and died to buy my pardon,
An empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives.
Because He lives I can face tomorrow,
Because He lives all fear is gone;
Because I know He holds the future,
And life is worth the living just because He lives.

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BIOGRAPHY

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THE WRATH OF THE LAMB

(Rev. 6:16)

Dan Kessinger

An angry lamb: who could ever imagine it? Through 1,500 years of Jewish law, no lamb had ever been angry or vengeful. The very nature of the animal itself argued against such an idea; the lamb was God's symbol of purity and innocence. Although it must be noted that all animals are equally innocent, *i.e.*, they are amoral; the lamb appeals to our sense of anthropomorphism. It is natural that we grieve over the death of the innocent lamb. I hope I never forget the scene of my Dad holding a baby goat that had eaten poison. On that morning in May when I was eleven years old, just as I was leaving to catch the bus, the kid died. I remember being surprised to see tears on my Dad's cheeks as he held the lifeless body. Were the goat and a wolf of equal moral value? Dad would have affirmed it with mind and mouth, but his heart spoke otherwise. He knew that animals were created for our use, and he hunted and slaughtered them appropriately. But on a morning in the May of 1975, his heart grieved for an insignificant lamb.

I imagine that there were many tears shed over other lambs. God knew our emotions, and he deliberately selected the lamb as the sacrifice for sin (perhaps even created it for that purpose). The lamb reminded the worshiper that sin costs a horrible price: life. "*The soul who sins shall die . . .* (Eze 18:20) The lamb taught us that through the process of atonement, the guilty might live, while the innocent died. The sight and sound of the lamb bleating pitifully as its lifeblood gushed from its body must have been a terrible scene. The blood reminds us that sin is death, but God is life. *Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.* (Jas 1:15)

The process had an agenda that was veiled to the Old Testament worshiper: God was teaching the world about himself and his son. The lambs were dispatched in as humane a manner as possible: unpleasant, but mercifully quick. There were always more lambs, but God was preparing the world for the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. His death would not be so kind.

So the lamb came. He not only seemed innocent. He was without sin. "*Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth*"; (1Pe 2:22) Would there be a recognition of his lamb-like innocence? It came not from those who mocked and assaulted a visiting Nazarene. To the brutal Roman soldiers he

had been little more than an afternoon's diversion. As a public nuisance suffering from delusions of grandeur, he had been turned over to their cruel mercies, with the orders "Make the beating severe." They knew only enough about him to pervert his claims into a satirical humiliation. Would any live only to later fall in terror before the lamb's armies?

On that fateful day, many Jews passed by wagging their heads in prideful rejection, an ignorant chorus was augmented by the local Jewish officials.

And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, "You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross." Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'" (Mt 27:39-43)

Did any who made these comments ever later read Psalm 22:7-8? *All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.* Did any of this mocking multitude ever drop the scroll with the sudden sickening realization that he himself had spoken the very words predicted by David? Did any of them then repent?

The lamb had suffered in silence, just as the prophet had said he must. *He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.* (Isa 53:7) The lamb had been innocent, just as the image of the lamb typified. *but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.* (1Pe 1:19) Herod thought him a magician; Pilate thought him law abiding; Pilate's wife thought him just; the Jewish leadership thought him dangerous; and the multitudes thought him a joke. By the end of that day, he was nothing more to any of them than a lifeless body: just another empty carcass to be disposed. Like with every other powerless lamb, the story ended when he breathed his last.

But the story of the lamb did not end, even when he arose from the dead and ascended to the Father. He who was silent against his accusers stands ready to speak. The lamb condemned for blasphemy stands in the power of the Holy Spirit of God. He who was meek and powerless has the symbol of all authority upon his head. In John's apocalypse, the lamb reappears. He is no sacrifice, nor is he mortal at all. Instead in one of the ultimate twists of symbolism, the lamb is full of wrath against injustice.

The Context of Revelation 6:16

Re 6:12-17 I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

Our subject and theme have been derived from the lamb pictured in Revelation. In chapter 5, the impending conflict of Christianity was found written on a scroll front and back¹ ready to be unveiled before the eyes of John. But alas, the book in the hand of the Almighty was sealed with seven seals, and there was none worthy to open it. That is, no one but the Lion of Judah. But when John looked, he beheld a lamb. The lamb is the lion, the lion the lamb. They are one and the same. It was Jesus of Nazareth. It was the Son of God. It was the Word made flesh. It was the "Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isa 9:6). It was Emanuel, which being interpreted is "God with us."

The Lamb proceeds to open that scroll containing a symbolic prehistory of the struggles of God's people which must shortly come to pass (Rev. 1:1). The first four seals unleashed the hellish consequences of the four horsemen, in the form of conquest, violence, famine and pestilence. The fifth seal reveals the cry of the martyrs under the altar. The sixth is the wrath of the lamb. The seventh is much more involved, and includes the sounding of seven trumpets. Another subset of the seventh trumpet is the pouring out of seven bowls of wrath.

The opening of the fifth and sixth seals reveals God's rationale in finishing the business at hand. The martyrs cried out for justice, and their cry is just, but it must wait for God's timetable. The wrath of the lamb is revealed as the consequence of the 6th seal's being opened. The climactic nature of the seven seals is upheld by the breathless silence at the opening of the seventh (Rev. 8:1).

Interpretations of these events are probably more diverse and contradictory than any others to be found in the Bible. To the premillennialist, they provide a description of earthly conflict which must soon take place in our generation. For instance, we read the following excerpts:

The Antichrist and his kingdom are obviously what is symbolized by the rider on the white horse. ²

The way this master diplomat, the Antichrist, could conquer the world through his sudden diplomacy is to offer peace and prosperity to mankind. In all likelihood, this could be accomplished if Russia and her cohorts were out of the way.³
 ...God will supernaturally destroy Russia ⁴

To some, it is a picture of Jesus in final judgment upon the Earth.⁵ To others, it refers to the outpouring of God's wrath on Jerusalem.⁶ Hinds thought that these events prefigured Constantine's vindication of Christianity.⁷ Others, including this writer, believe that the actual events depicted took place early in the 2nd century during Domitian's reign.⁸ It is not the purpose of this study to answer these questions once and for all. However, it is important that we understand that the wrath of the lamb had an initial fulfillment on earth, and a lasting revelation of his character as a judge. The lamb would be revealed metaphorically, even as he had judged Jerusalem with an earthly army (Mt. 24:1-34).

Though *final* and *eternal* judgment is not the correct depiction, the application is appropriate. Through the picture of the Lamb's wrath, we gain a much clearer image of Jesus in his role as judge and avenger. He is still the lamb of God, but he is much more.

The Lamb Has Heard the Cries

Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them. (Ex 2:23-25)

Did God love the people of Egypt? Did he love the wicked pharaoh? He certainly did not love the things that had been suffered through generations of enslaving his people, but his character says that he loved the villains of this saga. No doubt, there were many Israelites who had begun to question the faithfulness of God. Perhaps they cried "Where is God?" Others may have refrained from expressing this kind of doubt, but they too groaned. Perhaps they prayed "How long must we suffer this?" But there was a God in heaven who knew that justice would come at the appointed time. When that time arrived, it is said that God "heard," "remembered," "looked," and "acknowledged." The crisis turned out to be only one of patience, because God had always heard the prayers of his children. He was not looking in another

place as his people were being abused, neither did he forget his promises. This wording means that it was time for God to act on behalf of his people.

Some resent the idea of Divine judgment. They tell of a God who cares not to punish those who rebel against him. The only thing they seem to be sure that Jesus really said and meant was “do not judge.” Thus, Jesus is thought to be always tolerant of all behaviors . . . except for those who judge, of course. The wrathful Lamb image certainly dispels this distorted image of Jesus. Jesus is not assuming the role of judge in order to “get even.” Had that been his desire, he certainly could have accomplished it. The Lord’s purpose was that they might be saved (Jno. 3:17). Isn’t it ironic that the first sermon preached in the name of a risen Lord resulted in the salvation of his murderers? It was in accordance with his will that it so be.

Heavenly justice is no evidence of a lack of love. Whatever may be concluded about Jesus’ character, it cannot be that he did not love his enemies. So why is the Lamb angry? Is it over his own sorry treatment? I am fully convinced that God’s love, and of necessity the Son’s and the Spirit’s, is infinite in some respects and limited in others. It is infinite in scope. God loves not just a portion of the world but the entire world (Jno. 3:16). It is infinite in sacrifice, as proved by the giving of Jesus. Though some would disagree, I believe it is infinite in time. I do not believe that the demands of justice prevent God from loving those who are condemned. I am convinced that the eternal condemnation of the wicked will break God’s heart. However, the effects of God’s love are finite. That is, though God’s love is defined by blessings, many of those blessings are conditional. In order to honor the real concept of Divine love, choices must be made.

In the case of the martyrs under the altar, God’s love produced a perfect fruit. The martyrs had not loved their own lives (Rev. 12:11) but had been faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10). They had confessed and not denied. (Mt. 10:32-33). In so doing, those who were loved of God had returned that love to God, and they had received God’s promises, some of which seemed slow in coming to pass.

Incidentally, these martyrs were not just a bloodthirsty or vengeful sort. There is no evidence that the wrath of the Lamb was even directed toward those particular individuals who had unjustly killed them, but, rather, it was the situation with which they were concerned. There was carnage on the earth among God’s people, and they cried out that it be set right. Their cry was for justice.

Divine justice is an uncomfortable topic for many. Every poll I have ever seen on the subject shows that more people believe in heaven than believe in hell. Yet, the same Bible teaches us about both. Such discomfort probably explains why so many (now including several in the church) attempt to limit

the effects of hell. With much inconsistency, the joy of heaven is not similarly limited, though the Bible uses precision to compare the two. *"And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."* (Mt 25:46) This personal discomfort also explains the epitaph phenomenon; as one little fellow was said to remark, "Where do they bury all the bad people?"

The cry of the martyrs was in response to the promise of God. The idea that retribution ought to come did not originate with them, but rather it was the message of justice from Heaven. They asked not for special favors; they did not ask if justice ought to come because they already possessed the knowledge that it was inevitable. They asked "how long?"

The wrath of the lamb is a symbol of his faithfulness to his own. If the lamb were incapable of wrath, not only would he be a one-dimensional caricature of love, but also he would be guilty of misrepresenting his own intentions. Is it possible that Jesus will save those who are not obedient? Some tell us that if Jesus chooses to do this, it is "his business" and that we cannot know for certain that hell is a certainty for the unbelieving. If this were to happen, Jesus must disregard his own promises. If we cannot trust the words of the lamb on this matter, how can we trust him at all? The martyrs had no doubts that the lamb was capable of wrath.

The wrath of the lamb is an illustration of the regard Jesus has for his faithful. There is no rebuke of the martyrs' question, but, instead, there is comfort; there is an assurance that judgment will come. Jesus loves his children even when faith is challenged by crisis. The challenged still cry "How long?" and the lamb longs to have the opportunity to answer their cries. The wrath of the lamb is proof to the children alive and dead that the Lord longs to do what is right for them. *"For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him . . . (2Ch 16:9)*

The Lamb Has All Authority

And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals." (Re 5:3-5)

The scene is unusual, not only because of the unlikely substitution of lamb for lion, but also because this lamb was full of power and authority. No one had the strength or ability to open that seven-sealed scroll of the fate of God's people. But the lamb was worthy. Vincent compares the wording here with that of Jno. 1:27, reminding us that it was a matter of moral entitlement,

not raw strength.⁹ It was not the lion-like strength of Jesus that tore the seals open, but the perfection of the lamb that compelled them to be revealed unto John.

The lamb had seven horns upon its head, a combination of object and numerical symbolism that combines to say “all authority.”¹⁰ It is interesting to remember the claim that Jesus had made to his apostles immediately before his ascension to the Father as recorded in Mt 28:18. *And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.* While it was certainly true that Jesus had power in abundance, the KJV’s rendering here (“power”) is sufficient, but inferior. Jesus was not claiming to overwhelm with his strength but was claiming authority (the right to command and enforce) to reveal the gospel plan of salvation.

The authority of the lamb goes beyond that which enabled him to command the world on how to be transformed through the gospel. While on Earth, the lamb had warned of impending judgment according to his commands. *"He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him--the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.* (Jno. 12:48) Though the picture in Revelation 6:16 is one of a temporal judgment, it serves as a reminder of a coming day of judgment in finality. On both occasions, the lamb’s character remains consistent. He judges because he has the authority to do so. *"because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."* (Acts 17:31)

Re 6:12-13 I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind.

The authority of the lamb is made evident by the cosmic disturbances set in motion by the opening of the sixth seal. The language here is like that of several Old Testament prophets as they spoke of earthshaking events (metaphorically).¹¹ *"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.* (Mt 24:29) These descriptions are typical of apocalyptic style writing, especially concerning earthly destruction. The attempt is made to attach a cosmic significance to a terrible event. It is as though this is such a momentous occasion in the eyes of God that the creation itself cannot help but to lend its voice. In the case of Jerusalem’s doom, the literal and the figurative combine to preach about the reasons for its fall. The sun and the moon would literally be hidden from view, while the sparks of the burning city would appear as if the stars were really falling. It was more than just another conquest of another rebellious city. This

was God's ultimate judgment against the city in which his great name was written. It was the end of an era. No wonder the elements wept.

Such poetic sentiments would probably be immediately understood by victims of any devastating onslaught. To those who had heard predictions of destruction, they must have been supremely appropriate. They had already heard the words of Jesus concerning the fall of Jerusalem and seen how they were fulfilled. They would know what to make of this prediction. It was the certain judgment of the lamb upon yet another proud group of malefactors. The moon would reflect the fires of destruction, the soot would darken the sun, the sparks would fall, and the earth would quake. The armies would declare the authority of the lamb, as would the elements. Why should this surprise or amaze us? *So the men marveled, saying, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"* (Mt 8:27)

According to Re 6:15, the authority of the lamb worked to humble the high and exalted of this earth. From king to slave, all men would fear the coming of the lamb. *And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, ...* The Lord's final judgment will bring every man's works under scrutiny (II Cor. 5:10). It will consist of all nations (Mt. 25:32). The emphasis here is properly given to the high and mighty of this earth. They have abused God's faithful with impunity and do not anticipate the wrath of the lamb, but every knee will bow. The great ones of this earth must voluntarily surrender their power and authority before the lamb.

the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created." (Re 4:10-11)

Like the crown and the scepter, the throne was (and remains) a metaphor for kingly authority. When an edict is issued "from the throne," it is literary metonymy. Thrones literally issue nothing but comfort to the one seated thereon! Neither does the crown literally release statements to the press, etc. There is a concentrated effort in Revelation to demonstrate the divinity of Jesus by locating the lamb with full access to the throne.

Re 5:6 And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

Having successfully completed his earthly ministry, Jesus is now in his proper place of majesty, at the right hand of God. *who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,* (Heb 1:3) The lamb is an exalted lamb with all power and authority.

God's throne is generally a metaphor for authority. Jesus' throne (his kingdom or dominion) is characterized by righteousness and justice. *But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom."* (Heb 1:8) This image is in harmony with Psa. 89:14 and Psa. 97:2 revealing a divine throne established upon justice.

In a more pointed way, the throne is a warning of a real and impending judgment from Heaven. Beginning with Solomon who in various ways prefigured the rule of Jesus, the throne was also established as the judgment seat. *Then he made a hall for the throne, the Hall of Judgment, where he might judge; and it was paneled with cedar from floor to ceiling.* (1Ki 7:7) The Lamb's temporal judgments emanate from this throne of authority. They are neither capricious nor arbitrary. In these events there is the legitimate and unmistakable ring of the justice from the Lamb's throne, the promised seat of justice.

But the LORD shall endure forever; He has prepared His throne for judgment.
(Psa 9:7)

A king who sits on the throne of judgment Scatters all evil with his eyes. (Pr 20:8)

Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. (Isa 9:7)

In mercy the throne will be established; And One will sit on it in truth, in the tabernacle of David, Judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness."
(Isa 16:5)

When the lamb brought this limited retribution upon the earth, he was sending justice. There was no escaping his will, because of his authority. Upon him was placed all of the authority of Heaven, and over all earthly authority. This justice serves as a sobering reminder of the coming day of final judgment. There will be no escape. There will be no rivals nor claimants to his throne. Justice will be served by a lamb with all authority. *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.* (2Cor. 5:10)

The Lamb Sees

The Lamb is said to have seven eyes which are in turn the seven spirits of God. These seven spirits have been previously mentioned in Rev. 1:4, 3:1 and 4:5. In the initial reference we conclude that this number is representative of the Holy Spirit, rather than seven separate spiritual beings. *And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.* Interestingly, in the description of Rev. 4:5 the seven Spirits are pictured as lamps, or more properly as torches. They are connected with the thunder and lightning of judgment in this verse as well.

The word translated "lamp" is more properly translated "torch," as it in John 18:3 . . . As torches, the Spirit can be sent wherever the throne occupant wills. Since they are torches and not lamps and are closely related to the thunders and lightnings of judgment . . . But in contrast to the terror generated by the thunder and lightning of judgment, the Spirit instructs, illuminate, and comforts (cf. Acts 9:31); thus, comfort is mingled with terror.¹²

So the seven eyes of the lamb are the seven spirits, which are in turn the Holy Spirit. The impact of this representation is to say that the lamb is fully aware of the truth; here is nothing that escapes his attention. *And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.* (Heb 4:13) Through his own love and through the written instructions of the Holy Spirit, Jesus continues to plead with rebellious mankind. He knows them for what they are. That holy and perfect knowledge will also be their doom. The coming judgment is perfect and according to the Spirit's revelation. This is a true principle when the lamb judged men in the first century. It will be all the more evident when he returns to the earth.

The guilty then cry in terror. *and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!"* (Re 6:16) But there is no escape. The face of God metaphor is not one of comfort. *For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.* (1Pe 3:12) It is a face firmly set in retribution against those who do evil. The time for mercy has passed, and justice must be served. Again, this was a true principle in 70 AD; it was a true principle in 100 AD; and it will be a true principle when the lamb returns. There is no hiding from the face of God and from the wrath of the lamb. The lamb sees the truth in its entirety

The lamb sees the fullness of the times. The day of retribution cannot be predicted by man. Of all days, the day of the second return is most hidden. According to our Lord, there are no signs whatsoever of the imminent return of

Jesus. *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.* (Mt 24:36) We can know that whatever that day may be, it is the right day. It is a day chosen by the God who sees (Gen. 16:13). It will be consummated by the lamb who sees and the sevenfold Spirit of God who sees.

The Lamb Acts

The lamb had been lead humbly to sacrifice, but this lamb had possessed power unknown to his executors. His meekness had been mistaken for weakness, his submission for impotence, his patience for confusion. As he had been watching the events unfold on the earth, he had been awaiting the day of power. He would receive no new power, but rather he was releasing his perfectly controlled and disciplined power. Was the fury of the lamb that of power unleashed? If so, the leash belonged to no other. The lions of Rome were starved and trembling beasts possessed by a stupid, single-minded, savage hunger. Jesus is not the lion of the coliseums but the lion of Judah, the lamb of God. As each day passes, his role is that of the advocate of the unworthy and as the patient savior. He fulfills this role lovingly and patiently. When the day arrives, it is not blind carnage. It is a purposeful demonstration of righteous power.

It was because of sin that the lamb must be revealed in his power. God hates sin, but judgment is not a matter of emotion. The lamb came in retribution against his enemies, but it was because of real violations of the law. *Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.* (1 Jno. 3:4) His wrath, while it might not have been impersonal, was just and right. The lamb will come the second time with a final judgment upon sin and those who persist in it. As a righteous judge, his wrath is properly directed.

There is a great day coming; this is the message of the wrath of the lamb. What day was it? It matters little whether it took place in 70 AD, or 100, or 300 AD. The fact remains that the day came and was fulfilled exactly as he had promised. It also is of little consequence if we misunderstand Rev. 6 to refer to the final judgment rather than a temporal one. It is far more important that we recognize the principle of the wrath of the lamb, that we know that there is another great day coming. To live our lives in anticipation of anything else is vain indeed. *Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.* (2 Co 5:11)

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Endnotes

¹ Most commentators agree that the scroll filled front and back symbolizes the fullness of the revelation contained therein.

² LaHaye, Tim. *Revelation Illustrated And Made Plain* (Zondervan Publishing House Grand Rapids MI, 1980) p 100.

³ *Ibid.* p 101.

⁴ *Ibid.* p 102.

⁵ Jackson, Wayne. *Select Studies From The Book of Revelation* (Courier Publications Stockton CA, 1995) p 43.

and

Coffman, James Burton *Commentary on Revelation* (Firm Foundation Publishing House Austin TX, 1979) pp148-151.

⁶ West D. Gene. *Avenging His Holy Saints, Apostles and Prophets* (Sain Publications Pulaski TN, 2005) pp 301-317.

⁷ Hinds, John T. *A Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Gospel Advocate Co. Nashville, 1955) p 103.

⁸ Roberts, J. W. *The Revelation to John (The Apocalypse)* (Sweet Publishing Co. Austin TX, 1974) p 69.

⁹ Vincent, Marvin R. *Word Studies in the New Testament* (MacDonald Publishing Co. McLean VA, [no date given]) p 488.

¹⁰ Virtually every scholar cites animal horns as a symbol of power and authority.

¹¹ Hailey, Homer. *Revelation an Introduction and Commentary* (Religious Supply Inc. 1992) pp 197-198. Hailey lists a number of Old Testament prophecies containing similar language to that found here. Num. 24:17; Isa. 13:10, 13; cf.; 14:12; 29:6; 34:4; 50:3; cf. Jer. 4:23f., 28; Ezek. 26:15, 18; 27:35; Dan. 8:10; Joel 2:31).

¹² *Ibid.* p 169.

BIOGRAPHY

Though Dan Kessinger was born in Riverview, Michigan, the son of Bob and Doris Kessinger, he is not northern. Since the family moved back South when he was an infant, the accent never really took. He likes Southern ballads and fiddle music, not Northern Polkas and accordions. He roots for the Dallas Cowboys, not the Detroit Lions. After brief boyhood stints in Kentucky, West Virginia, and Georgia, his family returned to West Virginia to stay in 1973. He and his wife, the former Mary Amy West have two boys, D.J. and Thomas.

Rather than endure Dan any longer, Walton High School decided to graduate him in 1981. Ohio Valley College then drew the short straw. They weighed the shame of his having a diploma against another year of matriculation, and chose the lesser of two evils. This explains both his associate and Bachelor's degree in Biblical Science. The latter confused him greatly since he was married when he received it.

Dan preached his first sermon in the Spring of 1982 at the Mt. Zion church of Christ in Walker, WV. Congregations in Belle, Long Valley, Gandeeville, Proctor have had to put up with him. Since February of 1994, the Dewey Ave. church of Christ in St. Marys. That is until they find the best way to get rid of him.

Dan speaks weakly (*sic*) on a local radio program. Dan conducts gospel meetings and appears on lecture programs each year. He is rarely invited to these events, but he keeps showing up anyway. He is a frequent contributor to religious journals, and his articles are just as frequently mocked and rejected. He is the author of *A Cloak of Malice*. He has worked with WV Christian Youth Camp since 1984, and West Virginia School of Preaching since 1995.

LET THE REDEEMED SAY SO

Frank Higginbotham

The Psalmist David calls on God's people to stand up and to speak up for righteousness. "O give thanks unto the LORD, for *he is good*: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. Let the redeemed of the LORD say *so*, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy" (Ps. 107:2). It is clear that God has done so much for His people that it would not be possible for them to adequately express their thanks. Thank God for redemption!

The passage we are looking at gives a clear call for certain people to speak up for God and righteousness. These people are the redeemed of the earth. This suggests that even though some were lost, they are now saved. Those who have been saved by the blood of Christ need to answer the call today. We were all lost in sin. "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10). The universal nature of sin is then pointed out. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). When we obeyed the form of doctrine that involves the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, we were then made free from sin and became instruments in the hand of God to bear His message to the world. (Rom.6:16-18). We need to speak up. Satan has many tools to defeat the forces of righteousness. We are not ignorant of his devices. (2 Cor. 2:11). He has used intimidation of the righteous to cause many to become either silent or at least less vocal. God's people must speak up! "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 1:3).

The great prophet, Jeremiah, was reluctant to carry the message that God wanted him to bear. He explained that he was as a child and thus was not qualified to speak for God. "Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I *am* a child" (Jer. 1:6). Later he explained that he felt compelled to speak. "Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But *his word* was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not *stay*" (Jer. 20:9). Jeremiah felt compelled to speak out for truth. Paul made it clear that his convictions drove him to speak out. "We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak" (2 Cor. 4:13). This same attitude should be characteristic of those of us who are God's servants today. Christians should be set to defend the gospel. "The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel" (Phil. 1:16-17). Satan would like to intimidate us into being passive in our defense of the truth.

How frequently do we hear the infidel make known his unbelief? He tries to back believers down by affirming that it is only those of low intelligence who still cling to a belief in God. Evolution is presented as fact, and to take any other position is to demonstrate one's ignorance. Has this fear of being considered of low knowledge or intelligence backed us off in speaking up about our belief in God? This movement has been so strong and influential that they have caused our school systems to present only one side of the issue in regard to creation. They are offended by the Pledge of Allegiance referring to our nation as one nation under God. They want "In God We Trust" removed from our coinage and they insist that there can be no reference to the 10 Commandments or any religious activity in public places. They insist that all Americans practice the religion of the atheist. That religion is based on the belief that there is no God. Do they have the right to speak up for and practice their religion? Is it right that they insist on silencing those who have strong beliefs on the other side? It is time for the redeemed of the Lord to say so. Evolution is presented as scientific fact while creationism is referred to as unscientific. "The fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God*. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, *there is none that doeth good*" (Ps. 14:1). It is foolish to ignore the evidence for God to accept an unproved and unbelievable theory about the origin of things. One of the reasons men want to reject God as the origin of all things is the fact that this theory removes the idea of responsibility to a higher being.

When men want to do their own thing, they naturally reject the idea that there is an accounting day ahead. In speaking of the terrible wickedness of the Gentiles, Paul explained that they did not want to retain God in their thinking. "And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient" (Rom. 1:28). This rejection of God was not because evidence was lacking but just an attempt to sooth their conscience. "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed *it* unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:19-20).

Evidence that God exists is seen in the creation about us. How could anyone observe the complex and consistent nature of the creation without recognizing that there is wisdom behind it? "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork" (Ps. 19:1). Paul explained that there is evidence in the universe.

"And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness,

in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness” (Acts 14:15-17).

Does it make sense to reason that the universe with all of its order and design just happened? Would we argue this way with some great building or with a watch that accurately tells us the time? What are the chances that our phone book just happened? Does the existence of a building argue that there was a builder? Does the watch make us realize that there was a watchmaker somewhere? To understand the nature of God and His instructions for us we must depend on His revelation of Himself in the Word of God. I learn of God’s love through the teachings of the Bible. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). I learn of the great sacrifice that Jesus made for me by reading the Bible. “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father” (John 10:17-18). I am dependant on the Bible for my knowledge of the nature of God and His love for me. The atheist has had his say. It is time for the redeemed of the Lord to speak up.

The redeemed must also speak up in regard to the revelation of "Himself" in God’s book, the Bible. I could never know of my sin or of God’s love and way of redemption if it were not revealed in the Bible. Commonly we hear man make light of the Bible and speak out strongly against it and its teachings. People just do not want to hear what the Bible says. They have made up their mind that it can just be treated like any other book. Paul thanked the brethren of Thessalonica because of the way they treated the Bible. “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1 Thess. 2:13). Our belief is that the Bible is God’s inspired and complete revelation of Himself to mankind. It is time for us to say so. “All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Men are not reluctant to say that they do not believe the Bible. Any time that their conduct and the teachings of the Bible clash, the Bible is rejected as a book that has little or no relevance for people today. We must speak up and make clear that the Bible is a book that is God given to fully meet the needs of men. Repeatedly the great prophets of the Old Testament reminded people that the message they taught had come from God. It was not just a book containing their own ideas. Paul discussed verbal inspiration as he wrote to the church in Corinth.

“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (1 Cor. 2:9-13).

The words of the Bible are words God gave to chosen men who delivered them to us. The Bible is not a book that contains the opinions of men. The words of Paul have sometimes been rejected as just his opinions. This is seen in the way many have dealt with his teachings in regard to the work of women in the church today. The feminist movement has caused a clamoring for women preachers as well as a number of other positions that are not consistent with the teachings written by Paul. “Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression” (1 Tim. 2:11-14). Were these things just the opinion of a man who had great prejudice toward women or are they inspired words given by God? Even though many today have allowed pressure to drive them as they fill their pulpits with women, the Word of God has not lifted its restriction concerning the woman's place in the worship of the church. We will answer for our acceptance or rejection of His Word. We need not back off from our trust in God's inspired book.

We need men and women who are not intimidated by the pressures of the world, to speak out about moral issues. The "do your own thing" doctrine has done great damage to the thinking of many people today. Tolerance has been taken to the point that no one has any conviction on any moral issue. A doctrine called pluralism had grown in acceptance by many people. This doctrine demands patience and endorsement of the actions of all about us. People today hesitate to speak out about divorce, living together without marriage, perverted sex, abortion, euthanasia, and the use of alcoholic beverages, drugs, and even dishonesty and lying. These things are passed off by saying that these things are not our way of living but we have no right to condemn anybody or anything.

Look how far down the road we have come in the wrong direction. “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin *is* a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34). We have been reproached! Paul's list of the works of the flesh is still valid.

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:19-21).

Instead of trying to defend themselves in their immoral conduct, the cry is tolerance and the dismissal of all who criticize as being bigots who believe that they police the world. We need people who are willing to speak up on moral issues.

Let the redeemed speak up about our mission. It is not to entertain people, to provide social functions, but our militant work is to spread the gospel. Jesus gave us our orders when He said ‘Go’ with the gospel. When the Apostles were given this commission, they were few and travel was difficult. The challenge was not taken lightly. Before the death of Paul he could write and say that the gospel had been preached to all the world. (Col.1:23). Men are lost in sin and the only one to carry the true message of salvation is the Lord’s body. “But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15).

How urgent is our work? Do we really believe that the world is lost in sin without Christ? When we are thoroughly convinced that the world is lost, we will move quickly to tell the lost of Christ. He is the only way to the Father. “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). Men are separated from God because of sin. Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear” (Isa. 59:1-2). Our problem with sin is not a shortcoming of God’s but because of our sins. God can hear and God can save, but man must meet the conditions laid down by God in order to have salvation. Calvinism may claim that God has done it all for my redemption, but He has not taken care of my obedience for me. Christ is the author of eternal redemption to those who obey Him. (Heb. 5:8-9). How can a person obey commands that he has never heard? The lost will remain lost unless someone convinces him that he needs Christ.

It is up to us to speak up on the subject of salvation. Our work is harder because of the proliferation of false ways in religion. Religious division brings about confusion and unbelief. “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:20-21). Why then are we hesitant in fulfilling our mission. Are we spending too much time in entertaining and making people feel good instead of carrying the message of

Christ? Some of us will be haunted with the words, "You never mentioned Him to me." Our work is not to build and maintain fine buildings even though buildings have a place in the carrying out of our work. The lost have a right to depend on us in coming to them with the gospel message.

Satan would back us off from doing our work by intimidation. Let the redeemed of the Lord speak up. Just as it was important for God's people in the past to step up and take a stand for truth, it is equally necessary for the redeemed of the Lord today to speak out on so many issues. We have a mission to fulfill in this world, and we must not shrink back from doing it. When Paul concluded his life he could proclaim that he had fought a good fight, he had finished his course, and he had kept the faith. Paul was bold in his practice of Christianity, and he did not hesitate to say what needed to be said. Are you willing to speak up for the Lord?

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THE LAMB WHO LEADS TO LIVING FOUNTAINS

Neal Pollard

Between the opening of the sixth and seventh seal, there is an interlude in the book of Revelation. In Revelation 7, two major occurrences are recorded. Five angels reveal information about the saved of Israel, followed by the appearance of an unnumbered multitude from all other nations. The latter worship the Lamb on the throne; one of the elders asks John about the redeemed; he defers back to him; and the elder follows with a beautiful anthem about both redemption and the hope of future reward. The hero of this short section of this apocalyptic book is the Lamb Himself. Consider some of the wonderful attributes of the Lamb of Revelation 7:13-17.

He is a Divine Personality. He is Deity, and more specifically God the Son. We know this, not just because translators capitalize all references to Him in the section. The totality of Scripture teaches that Jesus, the Lamb of God (John 1:29), has always existed since the time from all eternity, that He existed as the pre-incarnate Word (John 1:1ff). All the power of the Divine is offered in the person of Christ, the Lamb of this section.

He is a Provider. The allusion in the beautiful imagery of this section highlights the providing nature of the Lamb. The text says, “They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat” (Revelation 7:16). This fits the New Testament picture of Jesus as provider. As Creator of all things (Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:2), He proves His provision. As sustainer of all things (Hebrews 1:3), He proves His provision. As redeemer of all mankind (John 15:13), He proves His provision. Almighty God provides for man (Psalm 103:2ff), and this is clearly seen in the person of the Lamb.

He is a Shepherd. Revelation 7:17 says the Lamb “shall feed them.” The word feed (KJV) is in almost every other translation rendered “shepherd.” In fact, the Greek word *poimaino*, found in eleven New Testament verses and fodder for a very rich, enlightening word study, means to “tend as a shepherd.” It is used twice of elders’ work in the local church (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2). It depicts the idea of providing the needs of the sheep, and as such builds on the phrase covered previously in the verse prior to it. In a wonderful section pointing up the great example of Jesus, Peter concludes by saying, “For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls” (1 Peter 2:25, NAS). Several times in John ten, Jesus refers to Himself as the good shepherd. As such, He is known by the sheep (2), He goes ahead of the sheep (4); He is the sheep gate that leads to safety and salvation (7-9); He lays down His life for the sheep (11); and He has relationship with the sheep (14). The saved will eternally enjoy this benefit of

the Lamb around the throne in heaven. Ironically, John refers to the Lamb as the shepherd. The "Led to slaughter" is also the leader of the sheepfold.

He is a Leader. "He shall lead them." God has always desired to be man's leader. After all, He is best equipped to lead man. He made man and thus understands his most basic needs, his makeup, his tendencies, and his choices that prove destructive. He knows His own mind and will, thus knowing the way He wants man to go. He also knows man cannot succeed at self-guidance. Long ago, the Holy Spirit through Jeremiah affirmed, "O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (10:23). His leadership is sure. If we will follow, He will lead us to eternal life. Jesus will never lead one to where he should not go. The shepherd in Psalm 23 says, "He leads me beside the still waters" (2). Such imagery as Psalm 23:2 and Revelation 7:17 pictures a calm, loving, and capable leader quieting fears and guiding the otherwise excitable, confused, and lost.

He is a Savior. According to our text, He washes and also leads to fountains of living waters. He came to save (Luke 19:10). He wants to save (2 Peter 3:9). He lives to save (Hebrews 7:25). God has provided the best to make salvation a reality for man. He provided scripture, that reveals perfectly—in both the Old Testament and New Testament—the Savior (Romans 1:16). He provided the perfect sacrifice to save man (Hebrews 9:28). John reminds the reader that the Lamb's purpose was to make it possible for all to stand, saved, before the throne of heaven.

He is a Comforter. "God will wipe away all tears." The Bible does not seem particularly interested in delineating the role of the personalities of the Godhead in this regard. There is no need. The Holy Spirit is called the Comforter (John 14:26ff; Acts 9:31). The language in 2 Corinthians 1:3ff is saturated with the concept of the Father as comforter. Jesus often comforted (John 14:1; 16:33; Matthew 9:2; 14:27; etc.). Thus, the Lamb will naturally, in step with the essence and character of God, be part of the comforting process of heaven. The backdrop of John's words was the sporadic, periodically intense, persecution the Romans were perpetrating. Tears of anxiety and sorrow must have been a staple among the saints' gatherings. What comfort these words must have given to faithful Christians striving to stay faithful. The active desire of God to supply His children with comfort is strong motive for perseverance.

Considering these many traits of the Lamb in Revelation seven, the Christian should be spurred on to greater service, endless hope, and humble thanks. Though the Lamb is worthy (Revelation 5:12), the sheep are not worthy of this Lamb. However unworthy we are, we are made partakers of Him (Hebrews 3:14). Praise God for the Lamb that leads to living fountains!

GLORY IN THE CROSS

Johnny Ramsey

The unsearchable riches of Christ, which Paul mentioned to the Ephesians, centers in the events at Calvary. The Captain of our salvation tasted of death for every man and walks with us in the shadow of death that we might possess abundant life. The composer, Charles H. Gabriel, aptly wrote:

*I stand amazed in the presence
Of Jesus the Nazarene,
And wonder how He could love me,
A sinner, condemned, unclean.*

Giving up the riches of heaven to save poor sinners like you and me is the heart and essence of the gospel's glad tidings. We behold the glory of Christianity in the life and teachings of Jesus and in the changed lives of those loyal to His gracious cause. One grand tribute given to the Savior was enunciated by Phillips Brooks. In part, it reads

*Nineteen wide centuries have come and gone, and today He is the
centerpiece of the column of progress ... I am within the mark when I say
that all the armies that ever marched and all the navies that ever were
built, and all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever
reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as
has that One Solitary Life!*

For the unspeakable gift of Jesus we should be willing to die to self and to sin. We should be ready to live to the glory of God as we rejoice in the cross. As Paul said to the Galatians: "*But God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world*" (Gal. 6:14). We should never neglect this great salvation but rather pursue it with grateful hearts. Should hardship and suffering come our way, we can endure it knowing that we have fellowship with the suffering our Redeemer endured for our sakes. William Cowper wrote, in part

*O for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heav'nly frame,
A light to shine upon the road
That leads me to the Lamb!*

The depths of God's love were clearly seen in the unfathomed gift of the Son, Jesus, who laid down His life for friends and foes alike. Spared not by the Father but delivered up for us all, Jesus Christ became obedient even to the

shameful, painful, and lonely death upon the cross at Golgotha. What greater love can there be?

The goodness of God leads us to repentance and should propel us into an obedient and grateful life, but could it be that the apathetic attitude of the followers of Jesus that last night in the Garden of Gethsemane is still reflected in the indifference many Christians exhibit now? Jesus had little support and comfort from His disciples that night. In agony, He wept alone. The betrayal of Judas and the subsequent denial of Peter are still often manifested in the conduct of those who would claim to be His friends. The weakness of Pilate, the mockery of a trial, the taunting by one of the thieves - attitudes such as these had are still prevalent in the shallow nature of modern religious leaders and the cowardice of many modern disciples of Jesus. Yes, the One who was willing to die vicariously - even for those who forsook Him - still seeks for people to follow, love, and serve Him.

Jesus Christ had our sins, our iniquities, placed upon Him. Willingly He became our sin-bearer and endured the painful humiliating display of the rigged trial and the cruel cross. In loneliness, Jesus was projected between heaven and earth so that a fountain for cleansing and for sin could be opened on our behalf. An old favorite hymn says:

*In that old rugged cross,
Stained with blood so divine,
A wondrous beauty I see;
For 'twas on that old cross
Jesus suffered and died,
To pardon and sanctify me.*

Since mankind cannot be redeemed with silver and gold or by vain traditions or parental inheritance, our Creator has made it possible - through the blood of Jesus shed on Calvary - for us to cry, "Abba Father" and know the cleansing power our souls so desperately crave. Because the Son of God walked victoriously through the dark valley of death, we can have sunshine in our souls today. Let each one of us glory in the cross of Christ and ever march on to higher ground!

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