

For the
wages of SIN is
DEATH; but

THE *Gift of*
GOD

is eternal LIFE through
JESUS CHRIST our Lord

ROMANS 6:23

The
Berean
Call

DECEMBER 2014

THE FINALITY OF THE CROSS

by DAVE HUNT

NEW DVD GREETING CARD!

EXCLUSIVE DVD GREETING CARD: WHEN THE TRUMPET CALL SHALL SOUND!



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DECEMBER 2014 • VOL XXIX NO. 12

The Berean Call

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The Berean Call newsletter is published monthly and sent free of charge to US addresses (\$12/yr outside the US). To subscribe, please write PO Box 7019, Bend, OR 97708, or call 1-800-937-6638.

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THE BEREAN CALL

“[The Bereans] . . . searched the scriptures daily, [to see] whether those things were so.”—Acts 17:11

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The Finality of the Cross

Dave Hunt

First published in October 1995

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me...”

— GALATIANS 2:20

Anti-Christian elements in the secular world would like very much to do away with all public display of the cross. Yet it is still seen atop tens of thousands of churches and in religious processions, often made of gold and even studded with precious stones. Most frequently, however, the cross is displayed as popular jewelry hanging around necks or dangling from ears. One wonders by what strange alchemy the bloodstained, rugged cross of torment upon which Christ suffered and died for our sins became so sanitized and glamorized.

No matter how it is displayed, even as jewelry or graffiti, the cross is universally recognized as the symbol of Christianity—and therein lies a serious problem. *The cross itself* rather than *what transpired upon it* 19 centuries ago has become the focus of attention, resulting in several grave errors. Its very *shape*, though devised by cruel pagans for punishing criminals, has become holy and mysteriously imbued with magic properties, fostering the delusion that displaying a cross somehow provides divine protection. Millions superstitiously keep a cross in their homes or on their person or make “the sign of the cross” to ward off evil and frighten demons away. Demons fear Christ, not a cross; and any who have not been crucified with Him display a cross in vain.

Paul declared, “For the *preaching of the cross* is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor 1:18). So the power of the cross lies not in its *display* but in its *preaching*; and that preaching has nothing to do with the peculiar shape of the cross but with *Christ’s death upon it* as declared in the gospel. The gospel is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom 1:16), not to those who wear or otherwise display or make the sign of the cross.

What is this gospel that saves? Paul states explicitly: “I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you...by which also ye are saved,...how that Christ

died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures...” (1 Cor 15:1-4). It comes as a shock to many that the gospel includes no mention of a *cross*. Why? Because a cross was not essential to our salvation. Christ had to be crucified to fulfill the prophecy concerning the manner of the Messiah’s death (Ps 22), not because the cross itself had anything to do with our redemption. What was essential was the shedding of Christ’s blood in His death as foreshadowed in the Old Testament sacrifices, for “without shedding of blood is no remission [of sins]” (Heb 9:22); “for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Lev 17:11).

WHO HIS OWN SELF BARE OUR SINS
IN HIS OWN BODY ON THE TREE, THAT
WE, BEING DEAD TO SINS, SHOULD
LIVE UNTO RIGHTEOUSNESS...

— 1 Peter 2:24

This is not to say that the cross itself has no meaning. That Christ was nailed to a cross reveals the horrifying depths of evil innate within every human heart. To be nailed naked to a cross and displayed publicly, to die slowly with taunts and jeers filling the air, was the most excruciatingly painful and humiliating death that could be devised. And that is exactly what puny man did to his Creator! We ought to fall on our faces in repentant horror, overcome with shame, for it was not only the screaming, bloodthirsty mob and derisive soldiers but our sins that nailed Him there!

So the cross lays bare for all eternity the awful truth that beneath the polite facade of culture and education the heart of man is “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer 17:9), capable of evil beyond comprehension even against the God who created and loves him and patiently provides for him. Does any man doubt the wickedness of his own heart? Let him look at the cross and recoil in revulsion from that self within! No wonder the proud humanist hates the cross!

At the same time that the cross lays bare the evil in man, however, it also reveals

the goodness, mercy, and love of God as nothing else could. In the face of such unspeakable evil, such diabolical hatred vented against Him, the Lord of glory, who could destroy this earth and all upon it with a word, allowed Himself to be mocked and falsely accused and scourged and nailed to that cross! Christ “humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, *even the death of the cross*” (Phil 2:8). When man was doing his worst, God responded in love, not merely yielding Himself to His tormenters but bearing our sins and taking the judgment we justly deserved.

Therein lies another serious problem with the symbol, and especially with Catholicism’s crucifix, which portrays Christ perpetually on the cross, as does the Mass. The emphasis is focused upon the *physical suffering* of Christ as though that paid for our sins. On the contrary, that was what man did to Him and could only condemn us all. Our redemption came about through: His bruising by Jehovah and “his soul [being made] an offering for sin” (Is 53:10); God laying “on him the iniquity of us all” (v. 6); and His bearing “our sins in his own body on the tree” (1 Pt 2:24).

The death of Christ is irrefutable evidence that God in righteousness must punish sin—the penalty must be paid or there can be no forgiveness. That God’s Son had to endure the cross even after crying to His Father in agonizing contemplation of bearing our sins, (“[I]f it be possible, let this cup pass from me” — Mt 26:39), is proof that there was no other way mankind could be redeemed. When Christ, the sinless, perfect man and beloved of His Father, took our place, God’s judgment fell upon Him in all its fury. What then must be the judgment of those who reject Christ and refuse the pardon offered in Him! We must warn them!

At the same time and in the same breath that we sound the alarm of coming judgment, we must also proclaim the good news that redemption has been provided and God’s forgiveness is offered for the vilest of sinners. Nothing more evil could be conceived than crucifying God! Yet it was from the cross that Christ in infinite love and mercy prayed, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34). So the cross proves, too, that there is forgiveness for the worst of sins and sinners.

Tragically, however, the vast majority of mankind rejects Christ. And here we face

another danger: that in our sincere desire to see souls saved we adjust the message of the cross to avoid offending the world. Paul warned that care had to be taken not to preach the cross “with the wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect” (1 Cor 1:17). But surely the gospel can be explained in a new way that is more appealing to the ungodly than those old-time preachers presented it. Perhaps today’s techniques for packaging and selling could be used to clothe the cross in music or a beat or entertaining presentation such as the world uses that would give the gospel a new relevancy or at least familiarity. Psychology, too, can be drawn upon to provide a more positive approach. Let us not confront sinners with their sin and the gloom and doom of coming judgment, but explain that their behavior isn’t really their fault so much as it is the result of abuse they have suffered. After all, are we not all victims? And didn’t Christ come to rescue us from victimization and our low view of ourselves and to restore our self-esteem and self-confidence? Blend the cross with psychology and the world will beat a path to our churches, filling them with new members! Such is today’s new evangelicalism.

Confronting such perversion, A. W. Tozer wrote: “If I see aright, the cross of popular evangelicalism is not the cross of the New Testament. It is rather a new bright ornament upon the bosom of a self-assured and carnal Christianity...The old cross slew men; the new cross entertains them. The old cross condemned; the new cross amuses. The old cross destroyed confidence in the flesh; the new cross encourages it...The flesh, smiling and confident, preaches and sings about the cross; before that cross it bows and toward that cross it points with carefully staged histrionics—but upon that cross it will not die, and the reproach of the cross it stubbornly refuses to bear.”

Here is the crux of the issue. The gospel is designed to do to self what the cross did to those who hung upon it: put it utterly to death. This is the good news in which Paul exulted: “I am crucified with Christ!” The cross is not a fire escape from hell to heaven but a place where we die in Christ. Only then can we experience “the power of His resurrection” (Phil 3:10), for only the dead can be resurrected. What joy that promise brings to those who long to escape the evil of their own hearts and lives; and what fanaticism it seems to those who want to cling to self and who therefore preach what Tozer called the “new cross.”

Paul declared that in Christ the Christian is crucified to the world and the world to him (Gal. 6:14). That is strong language! This

world hated and crucified the Lord whom we now love—and in that act it has crucified us as well. We have taken our stand with Christ. Let the world do to us what it did to Him if it will, but we will never again join in its selfish lusts and ambitions, its godless standards, its proud determination to build a utopia without God and its neglect of eternity.

To believe in Christ is to admit that the death He endured for us is exactly what we deserve. Therefore, when Christ died, we died in Him: “[W]e thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead [i.e., all have died]: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again” (2 Cor 5:14-15).

I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST:
NEVERTHELESS I LIVE; YET NOT I,
BUT CHRIST LIVETH IN ME: AND THE
LIFE WHICH I NOW LIVE IN THE FLESH
I LIVE BY THE FAITH OF THE SON OF
GOD, WHO LOVED ME, AND GAVE
HIMSELF FOR ME.

— Galatians 2:20

“But I’m not dead,” is the earnest response. “Self is still very much alive.” Paul, too, acknowledged, “For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do” (Rom 7:19). Then what does “I am crucified with Christ” really mean in daily life? It doesn’t mean that we are automatically “dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 6:11). We still have a will and choices to make.

Then what power does the Christian have over sin that the Buddhist or good moralist doesn’t have? First of all, we have peace with God “through the blood of his cross” (Col 1:20). The penalty has been paid in full, so we no longer try to live a good life out of fear that otherwise we will be damned, but out of love for the One who has saved us. “We love him, because he first loved us (1 Jn 4:19); and love moves the lover to please the One loved at any cost. “If a man love me, he will keep my words” (Jn 14:23), our Lord said. The more we contemplate the Cross and meditate upon the price our Lord paid for our redemption, the more we will love Him; and the more we love Him, the more we will desire to please Him.

Secondly, instead of struggling to overcome sin, we accept by faith that we died in Christ. Dead men can’t be tempted. Our faith is not in our ability to act as crucified

persons but in the fact that Christ was crucified once and for all in full payment of the penalty for our sins.

Thirdly, after declaring that he was “crucified with Christ,” Paul added, “nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life I now live in the flesh I live by [faith in the Son of God], who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20). The just “live by faith” (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38) in Christ; but the non-Christian can only put his faith in himself or in some self-help program or phony guru.

Tragically, the Catholic’s faith is not in the redemption Christ accomplished once and for all upon the cross, but in the Mass, which allegedly is the same sacrifice as on the cross and imparts forgiveness and new life each time it is repeated. It is claimed that the priest transforms the wafer and wine into the literal body and blood of Christ, thereby making Christ’s sacrifice on the cross perpetually present. There is no way, however, that a past event can be made present. Moreover, if the past event accomplished its purpose, then there is no reason for wanting to perpetuate it in the present, even if that could be done. For example, if a benefactor pays a creditor the debt someone owes, the debt is gone forever. It would be meaningless to speak of re-presenting or reenacting or perpetuating the payment in the present. One could well *remember* with gratitude the payment that was made, but no *reenactment* would have any virtue since there no longer remains any debt to be paid.

As Christ died, He cried in triumph, “It is finished,” using a Greek expression that meant that the debt had been paid in full. Yet the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, “As sacrifice, the Eucharist is also offered in reparation for the sins of the living and the dead and to obtain spiritual or temporal benefits from God” (par 1414, p 356). That is like trying to continue paying installments of a debt that has been paid in full. The Mass is a denial of the sufficiency of the payment Christ made for sin upon the cross! The Catholic lives with the uncertainty of wondering how many more Masses it may take to get him to heaven.

Many Protestants live in similar uncertainty, fearful that they may yet be lost if they fail to live a good enough life or lose their faith or turn their backs upon Christ. There is a blessed finality to the cross that delivers us from such insecurity. Christ need never be crucified again; nor can those who have been “crucified with Christ” be “uncrucified” and then “re-crucified”! Paul declared: “For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Col 3:3). What assurance for time and for eternity! **TBC**

Quotable

The church is not the agent God will use to usher in His Kingdom of righteousness and justice. That position belongs solely to God's Son, the Messiah. To say otherwise is to deny Jesus the glory ascribed to Him alone.

—James A. Showers,
Israel My Glory, Sept/Oct 2014

Q&A

This month's Q&As were answered by Dave Hunt and were originally printed in October 2005 and June 2007

QUESTION: [You have] objected to the use of the terms "Messianic Jew" and "Messianic movement" as not biblical....I would differ with your explanation of Jesus and His followers not being observant Jews after the cross. The apostles did continue to observe Sabbath after the cross (Acts 13:14, 42, 44; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4, 11; two Sabbaths at Antioch, one Sabbath at Philippi, three Sabbaths at Thessalonica, seven to eight Sabbaths at Corinth). The feasts of Scripture were to be everlasting for the Israelites and could be partaken of by the strangers among them. Most were everlasting observances, and...will continue in the future....God does not change His mind (Lv 23:14, 21; Zec 14:16-19). As a Gentile in a "Messianic" congregation, I have the liberty to keep these Feasts.

RESPONSE: I am sorry if there are Christians who want Jews to deny their heritage as the chosen people of God descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who were delivered from Egypt and brought into the Promised Land. That is wrong. Yes, the stranger who became a Jew through keeping the law, including being circumcised, was to keep the feasts of the Lord. But for a Gentile to keep those feasts today would be a fraud. His ancestors were not delivered from Egypt by miracles and brought into the Promised Land to inherit it, nor has he joined the nation of Israel.

None of the verses you list declares that the apostles kept the Sabbath but only that they went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. Obviously, that was because the Jews gathered together there on that day, and this was the best way to reach them with the gospel. In the early days, the apostles did observe the law and keep the feasts in order not to offend the unsaved Jews. This was only, however, for the sake of winning them to Christ: "For though I be free from all...yet...unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might

gain them that are under the law...that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor 9:19-22).

There are many warnings against becoming entangled in Jewish observances: "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike....He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it" (Rom 14:5-6). That passage certainly closes the door for Jew and Gentile upon obligatory observance of the Sabbath or any other Holy Day.

The very term "Messianic Jew" makes a distinction between Jews and Gentiles that does not exist in Christ. Am I a "Messianic Gentile"? There is neither Jew nor Gentile; we are one in Christ.

QUESTION: I have read your articles on replacement theology and Israel. You stated that Gentiles observing the festivals and other Torah laws were frauds. Could you please explain?

RESPONSE: That is not what I actually said, nor would I accuse those who sincerely think they are doing God's will of being "frauds." I would reserve that term for those to whom it properly applies. What I did say was that "for a Gentile to keep those [Jewish] feasts today would be a fraud"—and I stand by that.

The Passover, for example, was clearly to be kept by Jews as a "memorial" of the deliverance of their ancestors from slavery in Egypt and as proof that they were the chosen people of "the God of Israel" to whom that land belongs today. It would, therefore, be improper for Gentiles to celebrate the Passover—and the same is true of the other Jewish feasts. Though all relate to the gospel symbolically, they are specifically for Jews to keep as part of their heritage in relation to the land God gave to them alone.

And yes, I have made it clear that I reject categorically the very word "Messianic." It is confusing and is not found in the Bible. To speak of a "Messianic Movement," or "Messianic Christians," or "Messianic Jews," etc., is not biblical. Such expressions were never used by Christ, the apostles, or the early church. Yet one gets the impression from "Messianic" believers that they are being more biblical by using that term.

The Hebrew word "Messiah" (*mashiah*) appears only twice in the Old Testament, both in the same passage (Dn 9:25-26). The Greek form of it, *Messias*, appears only twice in the New Testament (Jn 1:41; 4:25). In Israel, prophet, priest, and king had to be anointed with a special oil symbolic of the Holy Spirit. The words "Messiah" and "Christ" signified the Anointed One, in whom all three offices would be fulfilled.

In contrast to only four appearances of "Messiah/Messias" in the entire Bible,

the word "Christ" (Gr. *Christos*) occurs hundreds of times in the New Testament. So it would seem more biblical to refer to "Christ Movement," or "Christ Christians," or "Christ Jews" than to "Messianic." That word purports to call us back to the "Jewish roots" of our faith. Unfortunately, "Messianic-whatever" implies that observing Jewish practices ensures that one will be closer to God—and it often becomes an excuse for imposing the law and Jewish observances upon Gentile Christians. This is unbiblical and something that Paul combated in his epistle to the Galatians.

The gospel is all about Christ, who died for the sins of the *world*. Everyone, Jew or Gentile, must believe on Christ in order to be saved. All who believe on our Lord Jesus Christ in response to the gospel have embraced the Messiah—but not in the exclusively Jewish sense of the Anointed One who will rescue Israel at Armageddon and reign on the throne of David forever.

The term "Messianic Christian" makes an unbiblical distinction between two classes of Christians: "Messianic" and "Non-Messianic." Yet Jews and Gentiles who believe the gospel have been made one in Christ. If one is a Christian, whether Jew or Gentile, he has believed on Christ the Messiah as Lord and Savior. There is no other basis of salvation.

The gospel that the apostles preached and that we are to preach doesn't have the word "Messiah" in it. The gospel is that "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor 15:1-8). It would not be more biblical to preach, "Believe on the Messiah, who died for our sins." The early church was all Jews, but it is never called "Messianic."

Scripture refers to "Jews...Gentiles...the church of God" (1 Cor 10:32). "Messianic" describes none of these. Jews and Gentiles who believe on Jesus before He comes visibly at Armageddon are in the church; Jews and Gentiles who do not receive Christ as Savior until He appears at the Second Coming will inhabit the earth for eternity—Jews in the special relationship to their Messiah promised to Israel, Gentiles as part of the nations that remain on earth (Rv 21:24; 22:2) along with Israel but distinct from her.

Again, it is presently impossible for anyone to be "Messianic" because all who believe on Christ (Jew or Gentile) are in the church, with Christ ruling as Lord in their hearts. They are part of the bride that will rule and reign with Him eternally. They will not be among the Jewish subjects in the Kingdom over whom the Messiah will reign on the throne of David. To call some Christians "Messianic" is not biblical but confusing.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS *to* CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

What Year Was Jesus Born?

QUESTION: Matthew says Christ's birth was during the reign of Herod [the Great] (Matthew 2:1). Herod died, by all accounts, in 4 BC, so Christ could not have been born any later than that. Yet Luke says that Jesus had just turned 30 years old in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar (Luke 3:1, 23), who began to reign in AD 14. So that would mean Jesus was 30 in AD 29? and thus was born in 1 BC, three years after Herod's death, thoroughly destroying Matthew's timing! In a further contradiction, Luke puts Christ's birth when Cyrenius was governor of Syria, but he didn't take that office until AD 6. Episcopalian Bishop John S. Spong of Newark, New Jersey, says that such contradictions prove the Bible isn't reliable. I believe the Bible is true. Can you help me?

RESPONSE: The seeming contradictions you mention (as well as many others) have been eagerly (in fact, too eagerly) raised by a number of skeptics as "proof" that the Bible contains errors and thus cannot be God's Word. One needs to remember that the Bible has been "proven" wrong many times on the basis of then-available knowledge either of science or history. However, in every case, when all the facts were at last uncovered, the Bible was vindicated and the critics were red-faced. It is the same here.

Quirinius—Cyrenius Was Governor of Syria Twice

First of all, the dates that Bishop Spong and other critics use in this presumed refutation were never by any means certain. Historians did not accept them. It would be foolish to throw away one's confidence in the Bible on the basis of dates that are questionable at best. For example, Will Durant, in *The Story of Civilization*, Volume III, indicated that he did not know when Quirinius (another spelling for Luke's Cyrenius) began his governorship over Syria. If Durant, one of the most highly respected of all historians, said the exact date was unknown, I would be suspicious of a critic who, in order to "prove" the Bible wrong, states dogmatically that Quirinius began his reign in AD 6!

Furthermore, on the basis of new evidence since Durant wrote his history, as already noted, other historians such as A. W. Zumpt are convinced that Quirinius was governor over Syria *twice*, the first time from at least as early as 4 BC. That governorship ended in AD 1. John Elder believes Quirinius' first time as governor began as early as 7 BC. Christ's birth, of course, had to be no later than 4 BC, which would have been when Quirinius was governor the *first* time, exactly as Luke states.

As for Tiberius Caesar— Most Interesting!

As for the alleged problem with the date of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, the historical evidence for its resolution has been well-known for many years. Yes, Augustus Caesar died in AD 14, and that date is therefore generally listed as the official beginning of the reign of his successor, Tiberius Caesar. However, the skeptics are so eager to find a flaw in the Bible that they fail to dig deeply enough to discover the perfectly sound reason for an earlier date.

In actual fact, Tiberius, though technically not yet the Caesar, had already begun to rule the empire some years before Augustus' death, because the latter was elderly and in poor health. Rebellions had cost the lives of those possible successors closest to Augustus. Left without either aide or successor, Augustus had in AD 2 adopted Tiberius as his son and coregent. Subsequently, Tiberius had been sent out by Augustus to put down the rebellions and had done a masterful job. Will Durant writes:

When he [Tiberius] returned in AD 9, after five years of arduous and successful campaigning, all Rome, which hated him for his stern puritanism,

resigned itself to the fact that though Augustus was still prince, Tiberius had begun to rule.

Counting his rule as having actually begun in AD 9, “the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar” (Luke 3:1) would be AD 24–25. If Jesus was born 4 or 5 BC, just before Herod’s death and during the *first* governorship of Cyrenius over Syria, that would make Him 29 years of age in AD 24–25, at the beginning of His ministry. Notice that Luke says that He “*began* to be *about* thirty years of age.” Of course, if He was born in 6 BC, He would have been 30 sometime during AD 24. We don’t have precise dates, but what we know certainly confirms the accuracy of Luke’s testimony.

The above demonstrates once again how mistaken and deceitfully *biased* are the wishful criticisms of the supposed scholars such as those of the Jesus Seminar (and apostate religious leaders such as Bishop Spong) who claim that the New Testament cannot be relied upon because it was not written until centuries after the time of Jesus. In fact, the dating Luke gives, which archaeological discoveries took years to verify, could not possibly have been known and recorded with such precision even decades, much less centuries, later, as the critics insist. It could only have been known to eyewitnesses on the scene at the time, which the Bible writers claim to have been.

— *An excerpt from* IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (PP. 91-94) *by* DAVE HUNT

Why Did God Allow Seeming Contradictions?

QUESTION: You Christians seem to have a way of somehow coming up with a “reconciliation” of whatever contradictions and inconsistencies “unbelievers” are able to discover in the Bible. However, no matter how convincing the “reconciliation” may seem to be, I am left with a question: Why should there be so many problems that you have to work so hard to solve? It seems to me that the very fact that there are so many inconsistencies (even if you supposedly solved every one) is in itself evidence that the Bible is badly flawed and therefore could not possibly be God’s Word.

RESPONSE: On the contrary—the many *seeming* contradictions and inconsistencies constitute a very convincing proof of the reliability of the Bible. If three witnesses who claimed to have seen an accident each described it in exactly the same language, word for word, one would have good reason to suspect collusion and to throw out their testimony. However, if each described it in his own words and from his own perspective, one would tend to believe them. Moreover, if there seemed to be some conflict in their testimonies, but if that conflict were resolved by probing deeper into the incident, that would add significantly to the trustworthiness of their testimony. So it is with the seeming contradictions in the Bible.

Irwin Linton, in *A Lawyer Examines the Bible*, puts it well: “The frank and artless narratives of the Bible are so obviously indifferent to the *appearance* of consistency, and show so clearly that irregularity which is the sure mark of honest handwork in the Oriental rug and of spontaneity in human testimony, that they have often lured opponents into attempts at destructive cross-examination which have only brought the Bible’s truth and consistency into clearer light.”

One of the Bible’s great strengths, then, is the reinforcing power of *apparent* inconsistencies, which, in the reconciling, prove the truthfulness of the narrative.

William Paley draws attention to this fact in his writings:

Now, in historical researches, a reconciled inconsistency becomes a positive argument. First, because an impostor generally guards against the appearance of inconsistency; and secondly, because when apparent inconsistencies are found, it is seldom that anything but truth renders them capable of reconciliation.

The existence of the difficulty proves the absence of that caution which usually accompanies the consciousness of fraud; and the solution proves that it is not the collusion of fortuitous propositions which we have to deal with, but that a thread of truth winds through the whole, which preserves every circumstance in its place.

— *An excerpt from* IN DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (PP. 94-95) *by* DAVE HUNT



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TBC NewsWatch

SAEED ABEDINI'S MOTHER FLEES IRAN

CHRISTIANITYTODAY.COM, 11/3/14, "PASTOR SAEED ABEDINI'S MOTHER FLEES IRAN AFTER REPEATED THREATS" [EXCERPTS]: The mother of imprisoned pastor Saeed Abedini has fled Iran following repeated threats to her life, her daughter-in-law reported last week.

Abedini's mother and two of his siblings escaped Iran on Friday, and are awaiting transport to the United States. Abedini's wife, Naghmeh, said that her mother-in-law is heartbroken to leave Saeed behind, but had no choice.

"Saeed's mum has been under constant threat and intimidation by the Iranian government as she has been following up on Saeed's case (clemency, hospital...) and now she is forced to leave Iran because of it and threat of being arrested," Naghmeh wrote on Facebook. "The government (magistrate) has now said that clemency is no longer an option and they will not allow Saeed to be treated at the hospital."

Naghmeh said she remains hopeful and prayerful. "I know that God is in control and only Jesus (no government) will get all of the Glory for Saeed's release," she told over 38,000 Facebook supporters.

(<http://goo.gl/JjvRAv>)

"BEER AND HYMNS SUNDAY" WITH THREE-BEER LIMIT

CHRISTIANHEADLINES.COM, 10/30/14, "OKLAHOMA CHURCH ORGANIZES "BEER AND HYMNS SUNDAY" WITH THREE-BEER LIMIT" [EXCERPTS]: A Tulsa church has caused controversy for allowing congregants to drink alcohol on the premises. Sunday, Oct. 26, East Side Christian Church featured "Beer and Hymns Sunday" as part of a series about the future of the Christian church around the world... The church maintains there is a three-beer limit and ID's are checked at the door.

"Everybody's welcome. No questions are banned. No holds barred," Michael Riggs, senior pastor at First Christian Church of Downtown Tulsa, told Fox23.com. "Just come and respect each other's opinions, and just have a good honest conversation about God while having a few beers at the same time."

East Side Christian Church is affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) denomination. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) 2014 Yearbook reports a 35 percent [decrease] in total membership over the past decade.

[*Charisma* news editor] Jennifer LeClaire...questions whether slamming

down a few brews is the way to solve the ills of the Church. "Are beer-based outreaches really edifying in the end?," LeClaire wrote. "If we compromise the purity and holiness of the Christian faith to win souls, are we really leading them into a true salvation after the bottle of beer is empty? Or are we merely compromising the gospel in the name of soul-winning without fruit that remains?"

(<http://goo.gl/tnF0PQ>)

DID GOD MAKE THE EBOLA VIRUS?

ICR.ORG, 10/29/14, "DID GOD MAKE THE EBOLA VIRUS?" [EXCERPTS]: When this article was written, the number of West Africans who contract the deadly Ebola virus was doubling about every three and a half weeks, making it the worst outbreak of the disease since the first recorded occurrence in 1976. Where did this virus come from?

Oddly enough it may have been transferred to humans from bats. Three species of West African fruit bats showed no symptoms when researchers infected them with Ebola virus. Out of 1,030 animals—including birds, small mammals, and 679 bats—members of three bat species showed signs that they are the "reservoirs of Ebola virus."

Like bird or swine flu viruses, which cause no symptoms in the chickens or pigs from which they emerge, Ebola viruses appear to have become harmful when transferred to other animals and man. Like many currently pathogenic microbes and viruses, the original Ebola may have possessed a function that was actually helpful. But now, in the post-Fall world, it has become pathogenic. It's rather like Swedish industrialist Alfred Nobel's invention of dynamite, which he intended for mining and construction, but that others readily repurposed for war.

Alternatively, Ebola may represent a degraded version of a virus that has no pathogenicity. Or Ebola may have been designed to exist in bats and not in humans, but a barrier to transmission between hosts in the pre-Fall world has since been lost due to Adam and Eve's sin. These hypotheses and others are still under investigation, and genetic research might bring the most likely explanation to light.

While medical professionals struggle to understand and contain Ebola...we need not struggle to understand that Ebola, like dynamite, may have begun with a good purpose.

(<http://goo.gl/zIvvS8>)

BOKO HARAM DENIES CEASEFIRE

CHRISTIANTODAY.COM, 11/1/14, "BOKO HARAM SAYS THEY HAVE NOT AGREED TO ANY CEASEFIRE AND THE SCHOOLGIRLS ABDUCTED FROM CHIBOK HAVE BEEN MARRIED OFF" [EXCERPTS]: Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau has denied reports of a ceasefire and insisted that the militant group will not negotiate.

There had been reports in the media that a ceasefire had been brokered by the Nigerian army and that the more than 200 schoolgirls abducted by Boko Haram six months ago were soon to be freed.

The schoolgirls were abducted by the terrorist group from their school in the village of Chibok in Borno state, north-eastern Nigeria in April.

Boko Haram's actions were condemned internationally and a social media campaign, "Bring Back Our Girls," went global, but in the end, freeing the girls has proved extremely difficult despite the involvement of several countries.

Only a few dozen girls have managed to escape and the fate of the rest remains uncertain.

In a video message released on Friday, Shekau categorically denied reports of a ceasefire and said the abducted girls had converted to Islam and been married off, the BBC reports.

"We have not made ceasefire with anyone. We did not negotiate with anyone. It's a lie," he said.

"We will not negotiate. What is our business with negotiation? Allah said we should not."

Human Rights Watch said in a 63-page report last week that forced marriage and conversion was common in Boko Haram's treatment of the women and girls it has abducted.

The report was based on interviews with over 40 witnesses and victims of Boko Haram abductions in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states, including some of the Chibok schoolgirls who had escaped.

In the report, Human Rights Watch was critical of the Nigerian government for failing to prevent abductions and do enough to support those who manage to escape their captivity.

The Nigerian government was also criticised for failing to bring the perpetrators to justice, and Human Rights Watch warned that Boko Haram had only been "emboldened" to carry out more abductions because of the "relative ease" with which they had seized the Chibok schoolgirls.

(<http://goo.gl/BTt5TC>)

T. A.'s Speaking Schedule

- Dec 14** **Calvary Chapel Cypress**
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(714) 236-1288
- Apr 17-19** **Living Hope Evangelical Church**
La Crete, AB
(780) 926-0534

STS 24/7 Broadcast Schedule

- Dec 5/12** **Thomas Ice**
Rapture under Attack
- Dec 19/28** **T. A. McMahon**
Bible According to Hollywood

Listen to Search the Scriptures 24/7 at:
www.thebereancall.org/radio
(Schedule is subject to change.)

Letters

Greetings,

I just watched *Israel, Islam, and Armageddon*. Excellent, excellent documentary. Highly recommended with two thumbs up! RB (Comment on TBC Facebook page)

Dear Berean Call,

I have just finished reading Dave Hunt's marvelous book, *Cosmos, Creator, and Human Destiny*. I'm not a scientist, but the facts Dave presented put Darwinism and atheists in a vice grip from which they can't escape, despite their arrogant, blustering ridicule. Sometimes I chuckled at Dave's humor in exposing how ridiculous evolution is. I enjoyed the book immensely. What a magnificent magnum opus for Dave Hunt. EM (email)

Dear Berean Call Ministry,

I just wanted to thank you for your [August and September] newsletters, which were packed with fascinating and useful information. I especially appreciated the two-part series, "The Age of the Earth." I had been looking high and low for just this type of information about the unreliability of our current "scientific" age dating techniques. This condensed article is perfect for my needs! I also appreciated the interesting article, "Job and His Friends." I once read an entire book on Job, and not once did the author suggest that Job may have needed to endure his trial. What a revelation! I also loved all the gems of insight contained in the article "Great is the Mystery," in particular the reference to the true source

of information (not DNA) and also the rise of evil through Satan's pride. Also the September Quotable "...even the most irksome chore is there to be done for God and His glory." A new perspective on drudgery! Somebody has to scrub that toilet, so adopt a good attitude about it. And last but not least, "Big Bang's Big Problem" in News-Watch. Ka-Boom! Thanks so much for two exceptionally excellent issues! DG (email)

To The Berean Call,

Greetings! As one who expounds on the brotherhood of those who worship the one true God, I was shocked and dismayed by the May issue. Why would someone need to go to a football game and tear pages out of a holy Qur'an? To show their hatred. That's not Christian, or godly. That's inciting a riot....

Muslims consider ourselves one Ummah (tribe or community), transcending color or nation. (I believe Christians are supposed to feel the same way.) So an attack on Islam is a "racist" attack.

Surah 5:51 speaks on not taking Christians and Jews as friends and protectors [because] they are friends and protectors of one another. This was proven time and again during the life of the prophet Muhammad. When he tried to befriend them they sought to attack him within his own community after being paid to do so by other Arabs.

Of course, we don't have to worry about that today as Christians and Jews would never seek to attack Muslims any more, right?

Jihad means to struggle to bring oneself to submission to Allah's will—not "Holy War" against other men. There was no compulsion to faith in Islam, and no war against children and non-combatants. And NO suicide! True, there are some misguided Muslims who have not read the holy Qur'an, just like there are some misguided Christians who have not read the Holy Bible. KN (TX, prisoner)

Dear Mr. McMahon,

I have received *The Berean Call* for very many years and always have been grateful for its outspoken, unafraid commentary. My passion is for truth, and am cognizant of Jesus' warning "do not be deceived," also realizing that even at 81 (my age) this is possible—a horrifying thought.

Also frightful, and very unnerving is our government's militant, pro-Palestinian stance. Another subject altogether! MO (South Africa)

Berean Call,

I thank you millions for your online conference. I was going to send questions but most speakers answered them in their

messages. Wonderful, wonderful speakers. I have heard most of what was spoken in the conference messages. Otherwise it would have been overwhelming. There is hope. If I was saved at 44 years old, there is hope! CW (CA)

TBC Notes

Serious Heads Up for Local Body Leadership

The responses to our 2014 October newsletter survey have been coming in, and the information we received in them is, in a word, shocking! The purpose of the survey was simply to get an idea of where the upcoming generation is in its spiritual interests and biblical understanding. The value of the survey from TBC's perspective was the hope that we could use the feedback to help us as we attempt to edify, equip, and encourage our readers, primarily those believers in their 20s and 30s.

Although we had a target group, we are receiving responses from a wider age range, which is very helpful in our decision-making regarding what issues we need to address. The most "shocking" response to our questions has been the lack of understanding of what constitutes being saved. Many marked the box "Faith in Jesus plus works." This is surprising coming from those who claim to be Christians, but some of their answers to other questions may indicate why they believe in a false gospel: they spend little if any time studying the Word of God.

Our exhortation to pastors, youth pastors, elders, Sunday school teachers, youth leaders, parents, grandparents, etc., is to hand out this anonymous, unimposing but hopefully convicting survey in order to get an understanding of what others around you believe, especially regarding the gospel.

Although the results of the survey have been alarming, many leaders report their thankfulness for it because of what they have discovered about those to whom they minister. The survey can be found in the October issue or online at www.thebereancall.org/survey.

T. A. McMAHON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

THE LATE GREAT RAPTURE THEORY?

EXCERPTED FROM *Whatever Happened to Heaven?* — BY DAVE HUNT

IN THE EARLY 1970s the rapture was the most-talked-about topic in the church. [Hal Lindsey's bestselling book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*], had captured the attention and imagination of his generation. Pastors preached about heaven and Christians eagerly anticipated being caught up at any moment to meet their Lord in the air. Even the secular world became familiar with the concept. There were movies, such as *The Omen*, about the end times. Radio and television mentioned the Second Coming frequently, and cartoons and bumper stickers also took up the theme. One of the latter solemnly warned: "I'm leaving in the rapture, ride at your own risk!"

All of that has changed. The bumper stickers have worn off, the movies have lost their appeal, and the sermons have gone on to currently popular themes....

The Late Great Planet Earth had only suggested that Christ's statement concerning "this generation" might possibly indicate a fulfillment within 40 years from Israel's rebirth. Yet that possibility had metamorphosed (though not so intended by Hal Lindsey) into *necessity* in the thinking of so many Christians that when 1981 came and went without the rapture there was considerable disillusionment with the pretribulation position. Doubts had already been mounting as that key date had approached. In fact, by the late 1970s the posttribulation view had gained a substantial following even in denominations and institutions that had long been bastions of the (until then) dominant pretribulation position.

Needless to say, January 1, 1982, saw the defection of large numbers from the pretrib position. At that point, however, the posttrib theory looked no better, because the Great Tribulation obviously had not arrived on schedule. To many it seemed that the only option remaining was the postmillennial view, a minority belief that had all but died out among evangelicals. After being generally written off, however, as Gary North admits, and in spite of the apparent unreasonableness of the A.D. 70 scenario, the postmillennial view is once again staging a dramatic comeback.

The New Issue: Rapture or No Rapture

Now that 1988 has become history without the appearance of the Great Tribulation or the Antichrist—and with the prospects of Armageddon fading into the future...the controversy is no longer between a pre-, mid-, or posttrib rapture as it has been for so long. The issue has become "rapture or no rapture." And the latter view is gaining strength so rapidly that it promises to become the predominant belief in the near future. While most postmillennialists believe in a rapture, as we have already noted, it is so far in the future as to have little practical effect upon an individual's life and offers none of the purifying and motivating hope normally associated with the expectancy of the imminent return of Christ.

Most Christians no longer know what they believe about prophecy and now realize that their previously held opinions must be given an honest and careful review. Many who were once excited about the prospects of being caught up to heaven at any moment have become confused and disillusioned by the apparent failure of a generally accepted biblical interpretation they once relied upon. Those who believed in the rapture because it was popular are, of course, abandoning it now that it has become unpopular. They never had a good reason for what they believed

based upon their own carefully weighed convictions. It is sad that so few Christians know the Bible for themselves.

The church is now ripe for the developing views of history and prophecy that either downplay or eliminate the rapture and put the emphasis upon "Christianizing" (in contrast to "converting") the world. A new genre of books espousing the idea that "victory in Christ" means a Christian takeover of this world is coming off the presses and selling well. Such ideas are being successfully taken into mainstream evangelical churches [which] represents a major theological shift in the church....

Being taken to heaven in the rapture has been to a large extent replaced by the rapidly growing new hope that the church is destined to take over the world and establish the kingdom of God. The focus has turned from winning souls for citizenship in heaven to political and social action aimed at cleaning up society. Scarcely a sermon is being preached about the world to come. Attention is focused instead upon achieving success in this one. If we have a big enough march on Washington and vote in enough of our candidates, then we can make this world a beautiful, safe, moral, and satisfying "Christian" place for our grandchildren. This is a very enticing scenario....

Whatever Happened to Heaven?

The expectancy of the Lord's soon return which was so evident in the 1970s at the peak of the popularity of Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth* has all but vanished from the church. Today there is scarcely a favorable reference to the rapture from most pulpits. And the hymns that once expressed the church's longing for heaven are now heard only at funerals.

There has developed a surprising and growing antagonism against eagerly watching and waiting for Christ's return, which surely was the attitude of the early church. The pendulum is swinging to an outright rejection of not only the pretrib but also the premillennium rapture....

We could cite the current struggle going on in the Southern Baptist Church as one example. It is the largest Protestant denomination, but is presently losing members at a surprising and growing rate to independent churches that deny the rapture, deny any place for national Israel in prophecy, and believe that an elite group of "overcomers" will soon manifest immortality in their bodies without the resurrection or the Second Coming, and take over the world for Christ. Only then will Christ return. Not to take His bride home to heaven as the Bible clearly teaches, however, but to reign over the kingdom that has been established by her for Him here on this earth. One of the leaders in this movement writes:

You can study books about going to heaven in a so-called "rapture" if that turns you on. We want to study the Bible to learn to live and to love and to bring heaven to earth.

Is this issue even worth discussing? After all, what does it matter when Christ comes or when or how the kingdom is established? Is eschatological debate of any significance? A partial answer would lie in the fact that "last days" prophecy is a subject that takes up about one-fourth of the Bible. How could we dare to suggest that the Holy Spirit would give such importance to something which, in the final analysis, really doesn't matter? Based

only upon the amount of attention given to it in the Bible, when and how and why Christ returns must be of great importance both to God and to us. We need to seek to understand why.

One reason for the significance of this issue should be quite obvious. Paul tells us that Christ is going to catch His bride away from this earth to meet Him in the air—“and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Consequently, those who expect to meet Christ with their feet still planted on earth—a “Christ” who has arrived to take over the kingdom they have established in His name—will have been badly deceived. In fact, they could have been working to build the earthly kingdom for the Antichrist. Yet this teaching that we must take over the world and set up the kingdom for Christ has become the fastest-growing movement within the church today.

Changing Attitude Toward Israel

One of the key doctrines of this movement is the claim that the church is now Israel, heir to all of her promises, and that national Israel has been cut off from God and has no further place in the prophetic scheme. This new focus on an earthly inheritance for the church has further turned the hope of being taken to heaven in the rapture into an object of ridicule. It has also produced a drastic change in attitude and a serious reduction in the evangelical church’s traditional support of Israel, an about-face which is being viewed with alarm by that tiny nation. Bill Hamon’s *The Eternal Church* is one of the popular books promoting the theory that the church is Israel and that Christians are now establishing the kingdom of God. Hamon reports that Kenneth Hagin’s Rhema Bible Training Center uses his book as a textbook and that it has been found to be a “valuable and indispensable tool” by: “Kenneth Copeland, Earl Paulk, Jerry Savelle, Gary Greenwald, John Gimenez, Ken Sumrall...and many other classical Pentecostal and Charismatic leaders.”

Speaking at Edmond near Oklahoma City on April 11, 1988, Rick Godwin, a long-time associate of James Robison and popular speaker on Christian media, delivered the type of anti-Israel rhetoric that is becoming so typical in charismatic circles: “They [national Israel] are not chosen, they are cursed! They are not blessed, they are cursed!... Yes, and you hear Jerry Falwell and everybody else say the reason America’s great is because America’s blessed Israel. They sure have. Which Israel? *The Israel—the church.... That’s the Israel of God, not that garlic one over on the Mediterranean Sea!* Earl Paulk’s criticism of national Israel and those who look favorably upon her includes the ultimate accusation:

The hour has come for us to know . . . that the spirit of the antichrist is now at work in the world . . . [through] so-called Holy Spirit-filled teachers who say, “If you bless national Israel, God will bless you.”

Not only is this blatantly deceptive, it is not part of the new covenant at all!

Currents of change are sweeping through the world and the church. In the crucial days ahead, the evangelical church could well suffer a division over the rapture and the related issue of Israel comparable to that experienced by the Catholic Church as a result of the Reformation in the 1500s. Nor would it be surprising if, in the cause of “unity,” the larger faction in Protestantism moved much closer to ecumenical union with Catholicism, which has been traditionally antisemitic and discarded the rapture about 1600 years ago....

The Real “Inconvenient Truth”?

We must beware that in our zeal to “change the world for Christ” we do not become so wedded to an ongoing earthly process stretching into the indeterminate future that we lose our vision of heaven. We cannot be truly faithful to the totality of what Scripture says unless we are sufficiently disengaged from this world to be ready to leave it behind at a moment’s notice.

There is cause to be concerned that the Reconstructionists and the Coalition on Revival as well as other kingdom/dominion advocates could be fostering a false conception of our earthly ministry—a conception which we must guard against lest we subtly fall into an attitude like that of Dostoevsky’s Grand Inquisitor. For him, Christ’s return to earth represented an interference with the mission of the church. He has Christ thrown into prison, where he visits him to complain:

There is no need for Thee to come now at all. Thou must not meddle for the time, at least. . . . fortunately, departing Thou didst hand on the work to us.

Thou has promised, Thou hast established by Thy word, Thou has given to us the right to bind and to unbind, and now, of course, Thou canst not think of taking it away. Why, then, hast Thou come to hinder us?

All human beings are tempted to be more at home in this world than they should be. Christians are not exempt from this temptation, and when they succumb it often leads to an effort to reinterpret Scripture accordingly. Reconstructionists exemplify this temptation. Christ’s return before they have taken over the world would be as inconvenient to the Reconstructionists and others in the kingdom/dominion movement as it was to the Grand Inquisitor, and for the same reasons.

Our hope is not in taking over this world but in being taken to heaven by our Lord, to be married to Him in glory and then to return with Him as part of the armies of heaven to rescue Israel, destroy His enemies, and participate in His millennial reign. Yet those of us who claim to believe this too often hold the belief in theory only, while denying it with our lives....

It seems ironic that the possibility of the rapture, which ought to bring great comfort, has caused great controversy as well. We dare not, however, in the name of unity and the avoidance of controversy, abandon the hope given to us in [the] Scriptures:

Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep [die], but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed [all, dead and living, in one instant].

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. (1 Corinthians 15:51-53)

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18)





[See page 12 for a special offer on the *Dave Hunt Classic, Whatever Happened to Heaven?*, which remains a prophetic warning and timely exhortation for the church today.]

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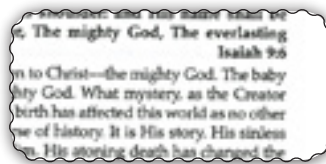
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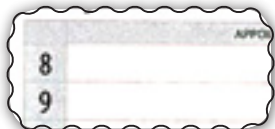


Choice Gleanings 2015 - Daily Devotional Pocket Planner

Gospel Folio—Now the *Choice Gleanings* devotional calendar is also available as a convenient pocket planner! Contains the same devotions as the desk and wall calendar but is small enough to fit into your purse or pocket! FEATURES INCLUDE: *Month at a glance* • *Daily readings* • *Page per day* • *Inspiring devotional* • *Appointment & to do list* • *A twelve hour (eight a.m. - eight p.m.) appointment schedule* • *Durable semi-exposed wire-o binding*

(will open flat) • Dimensions: 4.0 x 7.0 in.

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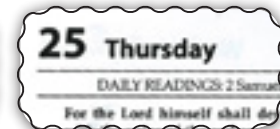
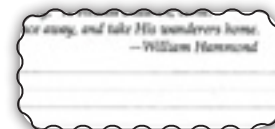


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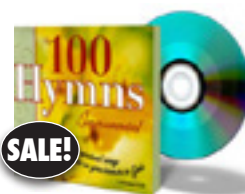
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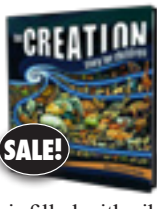
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