

“[The Bereans] . . . searched the scriptures daily,

[to see] whether those things were so.”
—Acts 17:11

“Behold the Lamb of God”

Dave Hunt

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ISLAM TEACHES THAT on the “last day” (which literally cannot come until Muslims have murdered all Jews on earth) all Muslims whose good deeds outweigh their bad deeds will enter Paradise. Following the example of their prophet Muhammad, killing non-Muslims, especially Jews, is among a Muslim’s best deeds. Dying in the process of killing any non-Muslim in *jihād* is the only assurance of Paradise that Islam offers. This is the tragic lie that motivates suicide bombers in Israel, Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere to deliberately target defenseless women and children.

Many who call themselves “Christians,” both Protestants and Catholics (though they may eschew the slaughter of Jews), have basically the same hope of reaching heaven by doing more good (in their estimation) than evil. Even elementary justice recognizes the folly of such an expectation.

No earthly court of law would annul a speeding ticket because the defendant had driven more miles within the speed limit than exceeding it—or set a killer free and reward him for saving the lives of more people than he had murdered. Surely such an outrageous concept, repugnant to the human conscience, would not justify anyone in the eyes of the infinitely holy and righteous Judge of the universe!

No matter how many “good deeds” a person may have done, “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23) and by His perfect standards are “condemned already” (John 3:18). Nor can the One who says, “I am the LORD, I change not” (Malachi 3:6) and

whose Word “For ever..is settled in heaven” (Psalm 119:89) go back on His Word: “My covenant will I not break, nor alter the [Word] that is gone out of my lips” (Psalm 89:34).

We know that “God is love” (1 John 4:8) and that He desires to “have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). But He is also infinitely holy and righteous and cannot condone sin. He has declared, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4, 20); and “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). That sentence stands. “He cannot deny himself” (2 Timothy 2:13).

Then how can God pardon sinners from eternal punishment without violating His own perfect justice? Would He not encourage sin and become an accomplice by forgiving the guilty? And how could He cancel the judgment He has pronounced without undermining His integrity?

Scripture declares that whoever breaks even one commandment “is guilty of all” (James 2:10). Why? Disobedience of any of the Ten Commandments, no matter how slight it may seem from our perspective, is rebellion against God—and that is the essence of all sin. That being the case, how could the infinitely holy God fulfill His loving desire to forgive sinners?

This is the central issue. Yet this vital question isn’t even asked in Islam or Hinduism or any of the other world religions. They all promote the popular delusion that an excess of good deeds outweighing the bad will tip the scales of justice in the sinner’s favor. But that isn’t justice!

Clearly, keeping the law perfectly in the future (even if possible) could never make up for breaking just one law in the past. Is the failure to recognize that fact the fatal flaw in all religions? In fact, no thinking person could persist in this delusion. Men knowingly wink

at such religious fraud in order to drive from conscience the awful fear of the consequences of rebellion against a holy God.

No, this deceit is maintained by stifling the convicting truth—the truth that God has placed in every conscience. Pride refuses to face the terrible implications of man’s guilt before God. Nor can Islam, Buddhism, false “Christianity,” or *any* human religion afford to admit the truth. It would lose its power over the masses if it confessed that it had nothing to offer, and that God alone could provide forgiveness to sinners.

Forgiveness of sin? How is that possible? Guilt, punishment, and pardon are clearly matters of justice—and justice cannot be set aside even by love, mercy, or grace. God’s righteous justice requires that sin’s penalty be paid in full. Any religion claiming to influence God to forgive sin is a fraud!

The penalty for the violation of God’s perfect law, which God’s infinite justice demands, is necessarily infinite. Man would be separated from God, eternally suffering to pay that impossible debt.

Only God Himself, who alone is infinite, could pay the infinite penalty. But how could He? He is not one of us. If only God could become a man...! And that is exactly the wonderful plan of salvation that unfolds throughout the pages of God’s Holy Word, the Bible—and *only* there.

Biblical prophets foretold that God Himself would come to this earth through a virgin birth: the seed of the woman “shall bruise thy [Satan’s] head” (Genesis 3:15); “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel [God with us]” (Isaiah 7:14); “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given...and his name shall be called... The mighty God, The everlasting Father...” (Isaiah 9:6).

The Qur’an says that Allah is ever merciful and forgiving, yet he offers no just basis for such forgiveness. The Qur’an comes from one man, Muhammad, who claimed to be inspired by Allah speaking through Gabriel. Muslims

rely upon Muhammad and the Qur’an, although the Qur’an itself exhorts the “Prophet” to confess his sins day and night (Surah 40:55, etc.) and declares that Allah changes his mind: “Such of our revelation as we abrogate or cause to be forgotten, we bring [in its place] one better or the like thereof” (Surah 2:106); “We put one revelation in place of another...” (16:101).

In contrast, the Bible came to us via about 40 men over the course of 1,600 years. Thus for each of its writers we have 39 other witnesses from different cultures and different times in history. Most of them never met. The only thing they had in common was the claim of being inspired by Yahweh, the one true God of “Abraham...of Isaac...and of Jacob” (Exodus 3:15, plus 11 more times), the “God of Israel” (Exodus 5:1, plus 202 more times). Their writings are harmoniously integrated with intricate themes developed from one to another in a manner that proves divine inspiration.

One theme running throughout from Genesis to Revelation is the crimson thread of God’s plan of salvation. This is carefully unfolded in deepening revelation from writer to writer—and supported by hundreds of prophecies that have been fulfilled without change or failure. God has left no doubt that He himself has come to earth through the virgin birth to pay the infinite penalty His own justice demands for sin, providing a just and eternal salvation.

Salvation for sinful man was part of God’s plan from all eternity. He knew that Adam and Eve would believe the serpent and that all their descendants would continue in that rebellion. God’s promise of forgiveness, however, is continually renewed through His prophets.

The means of salvation comes ever more clearly into focus through the unfolding picture presented in the Old Testament sacrificial system. It begins with the sacrificing of animals to provide the skins with which God clothed Adam and Eve after expelling them from the Garden. It was a temporary covering, not full forgiveness: “...the blood of bulls and of goats [can’t] take away sins” (Hebrews 10:4).

The promised Savior was called the Messiah.

That He would have to give His own life for the sins of mankind was pictured repeatedly in the sacrifices of innocent animals—especially the offering of a spotless, unprotesting lamb. We first meet the lamb as Abel’s sin offering. Cain’s insistence upon offering, instead, the efforts of his own hands was a clear rejection of God’s salvation and a prototype of all religions that have followed. The persecution throughout human history of those who obey God was also foreseen in Cain’s murder of his brother, Abel, because Abel’s slain lamb was accepted while Cain’s good works were not.

Repeatedly, a sacrificed lamb pictured the promise of the true Lamb of God, who would give “himself a ransom for all...” (1 Timothy 2:6). That the Lamb would be the very Son of God was also foreseen. As Abraham led his son Isaac up Mount Moriah to sacrifice him there at God’s command, believing that God would raise him from the dead, Isaac asked, “...where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” In faith, Abraham responded, “God will provide himself a lamb...” (Genesis 22:7-8).

That promise runs through the Bible: “the Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me” (Isaiah 48:16); “the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world” (1 John 4:14). Failing to understand their own prophets, and thinking that the Messiah would immediately take the throne of David, most Jews didn’t realize that He had to come first as the promised Lamb to be crucified for their sins in fulfillment of the Levitical offerings. Only upon His Second Coming in power and glory would He establish an earthly kingdom.

The sacrifice of a lamb and sprinkling of its blood upon the “two side posts and on the upper door post” of their houses (Exodus 12:7-13) caused the destroying angel to pass over the Israelites when God’s judgment fell upon Egypt, bringing Israel’s deliverance from cruel slavery, and is still celebrated as Passover by Jews worldwide.

Sadly, exactly as the prophets foretold, Israel mocked and crucified the “Holy One of God,” whom even the demons recognized (Mark 1:24;

Luke 4:34)! Few heeded John the Baptist: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

In contrast, there is *no* just basis in Islam for forgiveness of sin. And even in Catholicism, which makes much of Christ’s crucifixion, its sufficiency is denied by the claim that in the “sacrifice of the Mass” He is being perpetually offered. Thus the penalty is never paid on Catholic altars. For if it were, as Scripture says, the Mass would have “ceased to be offered... the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins” (Hebrews 10:2).

The continual offering of the supposedly “transubstantiated” body and blood of Christ on Rome’s altars rejects clear biblical declarations that “Christ was *once* offered to bear the sins of many...[W]e are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once*...after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, [He] sat down on the right hand of God...[B]y *one* offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified...[T]here is no more offering for sin” (Hebrews 9:25-10:18). Every attempt to add to or to perpetuate Christ’s once-for-all sacrifice on the cross is a denial of Christ’s triumphant cry, “It is finished” (John 19:30).

As in false “Christianity,” so in all the world’s religions, the penalty for sin is never paid but hangs over worshipers’ heads like a sword of Damocles: “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight” (Romans 3:20). Only Christ could and did pay the penalty of sin—but how can believing in Him justify a sinner? Paul confronts that very question: how could God “be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Romans 3:26)? He answers that there is nothing we can do but accept the sacrifice of Christ, which God has accepted on our behalf, and thereby we are “justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:28): “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...” (Acts 16:31)—“For by grace are ye saved through faith...not of works...” (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Many who claim to believe in Christ insist upon adding their own efforts in partial payment

for their salvation. But salvation is a gift: “the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23). To attempt to pay for salvation with church membership, prayers, or good deeds is an insult to Christ, who paid the full price—and is a rejection of the gift of God’s grace.

Some claim that Christ did not die for all mankind but only for those predestined to salvation, leaving the rest to eternal torment. Yet every picture of Christ’s sacrifice in the Old Testament was for *all* Israel. But every Jew was not saved, because all did not *believe*. Salvation is by faith.

The Passover was not only for all Israel but for all Egyptians also (Exodus 11-13), who would in faith kill a lamb and apply its blood to their houses. The manna was for all Israel; no one was left out. So it was with the water out of the rock: “[they] did all drink the same spiritual drink [from the Rock]...and that Rock was Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:4). And so it was with the Day of Atonement, all Levitical sacrifices, etc. These were for all Jews and for any strangers who would believe. There was never a hint that any sacrifice or other provision from God was for only a certain elect group.

We need not speculate whether John 3:16 means that God so loved all the world that He gave Christ to die for *all*. Christ settles that issue by introducing His cross to Nicodemus with another example from the Old Testament: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:14-15). Indisputably, being healed by looking to the serpent, exactly like all other Old Testament provisions pointing to Christ, was not for a limited number within Israel but for *all who would believe*.

So it is with every picture of the coming Lamb of God. Isaiah declares, “All we like sheep have gone astray...” (Isaiah 53:6). This is an indictment of every person in Israel, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). In equally clear language, Isaiah adds the good news: “the LORD hath laid on him the

iniquity of us all...” (Isaiah 53:6). Just as all have gone astray, so Christ died for all: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners...” (1 Timothy 1:15). Satan tries to snatch these “good tidings of great joy...to all people” (Luke 2:10) out of the hearts of those who hear it, “lest they should believe and be saved” (Luke 8:12).

Let us stand upon God’s Word, proclaiming to *all* the world that a Savior was born in Bethlehem, “the Lamb of God,” to bear away the sin of the world; that He died on the cross for the sins of *all*; and that the gift of eternal life is offered freely to *all* who will receive it in childlike faith.

TBC

QUOTABLE

A person who rejects Christ may choose to say that “I do not accept it”; he may not choose to say there is not enough evidence.

—SIMON GREENLEAF, A PRINCIPLE FOUNDER OF HARVARD LAW SCHOOL (1783-1853)

Q&A

QUESTION: I have a question which simply asks, “In view of all the Lord has done for believers, why do some fall away or go into apostasy?”

RESPONSE: First, as Scripture tells us, there are those who claim to be believers, who have never been saved (See—<https://bit.ly/41D6NWQ>). Apostasy has been a part of every generation since the beginning and fall of mankind. Scripture tells us that it will culminate in the last days when the Antichrist is revealed. His religion will be an apostate Christianity—it will accommodate all religions. Although the apostasy will not be fully realized until after the Rapture of the church, its development has been ongoing from the time when sin entered the human race. Furthermore, down through biblical and church history, many true believers, either in ignorance

or because of the weaknesses of their flesh, have contributed to apostasy. Solomon seems to exemplify this, he also married pagan women, which was contrary to Scripture. These women turned him to idolatry and he built temples for them to worship their false gods.

In church history, men such as Augustine and Martin Luther are regarded as true believers, especially by those who hold to Reformation theology. Yet Augustine conceptualized many of the dogmas that are foundational to the false theology and false gospel of the largest apostate institution in Christendom—the Roman Catholic Church. Luther is to be commended for his heroic stance against the Church of Rome but certainly not for his replacement theology and his anti-biblical hatred of the Jews. Later church history is replete with professing and confessing Christians who (knowingly or unknowingly) participated in the development of apostasy.

As Dave Hunt noted, “those who believe in falling away would say of a professing Christian who has denied the faith and is living in unrepentant sin that he has ‘fallen from grace’ and has ‘lost his salvation.’ In contrast, those who believe there is security for believers, while no more tolerant of such conduct, would say of the same person that probably Christ ‘never knew him’—he was never a Christian. We must give the comfort and assurance of Scripture to those who are saved; but at the same time we must not give false and unbiblical comfort to those who merely say they are saved but deny with their lives what they profess with their lips.

“Are we not then saved by our works? Indeed not! In 1 Corinthians 3:13-15 every Christian’s works are tried by fire at the ‘judgment seat of Christ’ before which ‘we must all appear’ (2 Cor 5:10). Good works bring rewards; a lack of them does not cause loss of salvation. The person who hasn’t even one good work (*all* of his works are burned up) is still ‘saved; yet so as by fire’ (1 Cor 3:15). We would not think such a person was saved at all. Yet one who may seem outwardly not to be a Christian, who has no good works as evidence—if he has truly received the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior, is

then ‘saved as by fire’ and shall never perish *in spite of his lack of works.*”

QUESTION: Why do so many focus on President Trump and America in regards to Israel? I am expecting all nations to turn against Israel, but others seem to think America is the answer to Israel’s problems. I have quite a few of your books (Dave Hunt and T. A. McMahon), and have been getting your newsletter for many years. I’m not swayed by these kinds of ideas, but I am bewildered at what is being promoted. Building the Third Temple? I know some are working on breeding red heifers, too.

RESPONSE: Some may consider America and President Trump to be the answer to Israel’s problems, but Scripture has another view. In Joel 3:2, the prophet writes, “I will also gather *all nations*, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land [emphasis added].”

“All nations” must include the United States (if it still exists at that time). So, while Trump’s administration and possibly Vance’s (if he is elected) may grant some time for Israel to build a Third Temple, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5 tells us: “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?”

As to “the man of sin” (the Antichrist), there has to be a Third Temple existing for the desecration of “the temple of God” to take place.

Further, we are reminded that in the Olivet discourse, Jesus prophesied, “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place...Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains.... For then shall be great tribulation...” (Matthew 24:15-21).

As we have noted, there are a growing number of “Bible teachers” who spiritualize these words of Jesus and them, for one example, to speak of the event or personage as symbolic of something else. Nevertheless, Jesus’ Jewish listeners clearly understood His Words quite literally. Indeed, they would point to an almost identical event when Antiochus IV (Epiphanes), the king of Syria, captured Jerusalem in 167 BC and desecrated the temple by offering the sacrifice of a pig on an altar to Zeus (the Abomination of Desolation). The Words of Jesus are easily recognized as predicting a repetition of what Antiochus did, and to do so, there must be a real physical temple in Jerusalem at the End of Days.

QUESTION: Psalm 40:6 reads, “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.” Why did David say this verse when a good chunk of Leviticus made rules on sacrifice?

RESPONSE: First of all, because he was inspired by the Lord to write this down. Secondly, he’s referencing 1 Samuel 15:22, where Samuel was inspired to say, “Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.”

Further, he is speaking prophetically of the Lord Jesus. Verse 7 of Psalm 40 reads, “Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me.”

Hebrews 10:5 explains further, “Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me....”

Simply put, David wrote this verse because

he was inspired by the Lord to do so and it speaks emphatically of the end of the Levitical sacrifices. In Hebrews 10:9, God inspired the writer to say, “Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.”

LETTERS

Dear TBC,

Just finished reading *TULIP and the Bible* by Dave Hunt. Thank you! Answered a lot of questions. I have friends that hold to Calvinism so I wanted to learn more. MC (email)

Dear TBC,

Biblical ignorance is deadly to the soul. I pray each person [would] have a personal Bible and know it. Sadly, a lack of love and mentors in the church also leads to looking into wrong ways. The problem with the church is not hypocrisy, which is self-deception, but rather the number of intentional wolves within. 1 Samuel 15:23: “For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.” MS (email)

Dear TBC,

The deception of false Christs is flourishing. The Mormon-influenced *The Chosen* with their main actor, a Catholic, funneling watchers into their Catholic Hallow app, and now the JW’s “Good News According to Jesus” drawing people to another cult. Jesus warned, “Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not” (Mt 24:26). People watching these productions are emotionally programmed by years of movie-watching to relate to actors and are ready to accept their false gospels and teachings. Anon. (email)

NOTE: Our purpose in this section is to simply show what kind of feedback we receive. We may respond to some of them in private whether or not we agree with their views.

NEWSWATCH

READING TO YOUR CHILD IS SO IMPORTANT

INTELLECTUALTAKEOUT.ORG, 5/9/16, "READING TO YOUR CHILD: THIS IS WHY IT'S SO IMPORTANT" [EXCERPTS]: So what happens to children when they participate in shared reading? Does it make a difference to their learning? If so, what aspects of their learning are affected?

A number of studies have been conducted showing the value of shared reading in children's language development, especially in vocabulary and concept development. Early childhood researcher Vivian Paley...found that kindergarten children learned when a story was dramatized in shared reading. Not only did children develop oral language, they imaginatively learned the conventions of a story, such as character, plot and themes....children also learned how to use language in multiple ways.

Other researchers have found that when parents, specifically mothers, knew how to interact with their children during shared reading using positive reinforcement and asking questions about the story, both children and mothers benefited.

What's more, shared story experiences have also been shown to have an influence on children's understanding of math concepts and geometry in kindergarten.

(<https://bit.ly/4gDdmgr>)

News stories are selected for reader awareness and as an exercise in discerning the times from a biblical perspective.

DINO-TO-BIRD DOGMA

CREATION.COM, 8/31/24, "BIRD BREATHING ANATOMY BREAKS DINO-TO-BIRD DOGMA" [EXCERPTS]: Do we eat Kentucky Fried Dinosaur? According to the dogma of many evolutionary propagandists for the last decade or so, indeed we do—they believe that birds evolved from the carnivorous dinosaur group...theropods. Yet there are many problems with this idea. Research into the birds' lung and leg anatomy

provides more strong evidence against it.

However, there have been some lonely dissenters even among evolutionists. For example, Dr Storrs Olson, Curator of Birds at the National Museum [the Smithsonian Institution], wrote: "The idea of feathered dinosaurs and the theropod origin of birds is being actively promulgated by a cadre of zealous scientists acting in concert with certain editors at *Nature* and *National Geographic* who themselves have become outspoken and highly biased proselytizers of the faith."

Yet another problem for the dino-bird theory is that birds and reptiles have very different lung systems. Reptilian lungs operate like bellows....

But birds have a complicated system of air sacs, even involving their hollow bones. This system keeps air flowing in *one* direction through special tubes (*parabronchi*, singular *parabronchus*) in the lung, and blood

moves through the lung's blood vessels in the opposite direction for efficient oxygen uptake, an excellent engineering design.

Recent research has shown that *Archaeopteryx* skeletons had pneumatized vertebrae and pelvis. This indicates the presence of both a cervical and abdominal air sac, i.e. at least two of the five sacs present in modern birds. This in turn indicates that the unique avian lung design was already present in what most evolutionists claim is the earliest bird.

(<https://bit.ly/41GBQBi>)

DIVINITY STUDENTS FORCED TO READ WITCH'S SPELL

THECOLLEGEFIX.COM, 9/3/24, "YALE DIVINITY STUDENTS FORCED TO READ FROM WITCH'S 'SPELL' AT ORIENTATION" [EXCERPTS]: Yale's Divinity School coerced students to read from a "spell" written by a "witch" as part of its Before the Fall Orientation.

One of these small group periods was the first activity of orientation. Participating as

an incoming student in one of these circles, I saw how the discussion opened with a set of “Restorative Circle Rules.” These rules boiled down to a warning to be open minded: all viewpoints were expected to be heard, that you only have to take what you want from the circle and participate as wanted—at least nominally.

After this show of inclusion, we as students were led to read aloud, line by line and one by one, from Adrienne Brown’s “Radical Gratitude Spell.”

Brown has been described by Meeting of Minds as a “mixed-race Black queer American writer, community organizer, facilitator, witch and—may I say—goddess.”

This context of Brown, her work, and her particular spiritual inclinations was not given to students before participating in the reading. As such, the group reading of the spell took on an undeniable coven-like feeling, with students unable to fully consent to the pseudo-ritual knowingly, despite the Circle Rules.

(<https://bit.ly/4iI7jsB>)

TBC NOTES

The Simplicity of the Gospel

[Taken from *The Doctrine of Salvation: By Grace Through Faith, the Gift of God* written by Dave Hunt and T. A. McMahan, edited by Barbara Lay]

Non-believers tend to get nervous when Christians start mentioning the concept of “being saved.” It makes them uncomfortable. They may not understand some of the terminology used, or they may recall images of the less-than-scrupulous TV preachers crying out for them to be “saved” in one breath and then asking for money in the next.

And yet, the truth is that one of the most important concepts contained within the Word of God is the doctrine of salvation. Romans 1:16 states: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto

salvation to every one who believes....” The gospel is that declaration from God in His Word that very simply tells us that if we truly believe it, we are saved!

What exactly is this gospel? Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4: “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.”

Then he continues with a clearer description of just what that gospel comprises: “...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....” He gets a little more personal then, reminding them that, as proof, after Jesus rose He was seen by Cephas (Peter) and by other witnesses to the resurrection. And that is the gospel! It’s a simple message.

In the Book of Acts, we read of the Philipian jailer, who was charged with the responsibility of keeping an eye on Paul and Silas. They had been thrown into prison for causing trouble in the city by teaching customs to the people that were not like what they had known previously. The two were locked up in the inner prison for their “crime,” and their feet were fastened in the stocks. What did they do while there? Weep and groan? Curse God? Organize a protest? Demand legal representation?

Read the fascinating account: The Bible tells us that around midnight, “Paul and Silas *prayed and sang praises unto God*, and the prisoners heard them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately the doors were opened, and everyone’s bands were loosed. The keeper of the prison, awakening from his sleep and seeing the prison doors open, drew out his sword and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had fled. But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying ‘Do thyself no harm: for we are all here!’ Then he [the jailer] called for a light and sprang in and came trembling and fell

down before Paul and Silas, and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’”

Paul didn’t tell him, “Well, you have to get baptized now. You’ve got to join the church and go through the sacraments....” No, the jailer had asked a straightforward question, and Paul gave him a straightforward answer: “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*”

To “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” means to believe in what Christ did for us when He died upon the Cross. We must understand and believe in the redemptive work that was finished then and there. If you truly believe this, you are saved! This is the gospel! It’s not about works that we have done or might do. In John 3:36, Jesus said, “He that believeth on the Son has [present tense] everlasting life and he that

believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the *wrath of God* abideth on him [italics added].”

The gospel is just a simple declaration of who Jesus Christ is and how we must receive Him into our hearts. In order to die for all the sins of mankind, He would have to be God. He alone could pay that infinite penalty—death—that His own infinite justice demanded, and then He rose from the grave the third day. He did it all. And He’s alive now! We can have eternal life, pardon, and forgiveness as a free gift. The fact that it is a gift means we have to accept it as such. We can’t pay for it. We can’t earn it—and all of this together is the gospel itself!

T. A. McMAHON
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A RETURN TO BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY

PART TWO

EXCERPTED FROM *BEYOND SEDUCTION** BY DAVE HUNT

HOW COULD THE CHURCH be expected to establish the kingdom by taking over the world when even God cannot accomplish that without violating man's freedom of choice? During His thousand-year reign, Christ will visibly rule the world in perfect righteousness from Jerusalem and will impose peace upon all nations. Satan will be locked up, robbed of the power to tempt. Justice will be meted out swiftly. The lion will lie down with the lamb and the desert will blossom like a rose. The whole earth will almost resemble the Garden of Eden before the fall. Yet at the end of the thousand years, when Satan is released, millions of those who have experienced the Edenic state and Christ's perfect reign all their lives will be deceived, just as Eve was. Converging from all over the world to war against Christ and the saints at Jerusalem, these rebels will finally have to be banished from God's presence forever (Revelation 20:7-10).

The millennial reign of Christ upon earth, rather than being the kingdom of God, will in fact be the final proof of the incorrigible nature of the human heart. The true kingdom which "flesh and blood cannot inherit" (1 Corinthians 15:50) pertains to the heart into which Christ has been received as Lord and Savior, and will be fully realized only in the "new heaven and new earth" (Revelation 21:1). Of this "everlasting kingdom" (Psalm 145:13) and the peace it establishes "there shall be no end" (Isaiah 9:6-7); yet the millennium ends, and in a war. A perfect Edenic environment where all ecological, economic, sociological, and political problems are solved fails to perfect mankind. So much for the theories of psychology and sociology and utopian dreams.

Christ declared that it was not the things on the outside but *what man is within his heart* that causes him to do evil (Matthew 15:16-20). Only those who admit this fact and in humility confess their guilt, cry out to God for mercy, and accept His remedy in Christ are cleansed of sin and made into new creations. They alone can dwell in God's new universe. The victorious Christian has enthroned Christ in the place of self, having received Him to dwell in his heart by faith (Ephesians 3:17). Indeed, Christ has become his very life (Colossians 3:3-4). The practical evidence for that fact, so often lacking among those who call themselves Christians, is the power to live for others instead of for self:

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? (Isaiah 58:6-7).

Far from being restored to Adam's state, by God's grace what we have received in Christ as the last Adam is infinitely better than anything known to the first Adam. Those who are in Christ are part of a new creation for whom "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Our primary goal is not to "restore earth" but to call mankind to citizenship in a "new heavens and a new earth" (2 Peter 3:13). We know, in fact, that "the heavens and the earth which are now" are doomed, "reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Peter 3:7,10). This destruction of the present universe must not be dismissed as “negative” or “gloom and doom.” On the contrary, it ought to motivate the Christian, as it did Peter, to holy living:

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with the fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness (2 Peter 3:11-12).

THE NARROW GATE TO HEAVEN

The fact that the Christian no longer belongs to this earth but to heaven is a major teaching of the New Testament. Paul wrote that God has “blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3). As our forerunner and representative, Christ has entered into heaven for us (Hebrews 6:19-20). Indeed, Paul declared that we are already seated “in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6), having become by His grace “fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19), and are now “heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17). Our citizenship “is in heaven” (Philippians 3:20). Peter assures us that we have an “inheritance incorruptible and undefiled” that is “reserved in heaven” for us (1 Peter 1:4). It is to heaven where Christ has gone to His Father’s right hand, and it is to heaven that we expect at any moment to be taken in an ecstatic catching-away (rapture):

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. 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 (John 14:2-3).

The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout...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).

Far from indicating that the world will be converted, the Bible makes it clear that the overwhelming majority of people will reject Christ. We will be able to persuade only a few (John 15:16-19) to enter through the “strait gate” onto the “narrow way” to heaven (Matthew 7:13-14) that Christ Himself claims to be and of which He said, “Few there be that find it.” And we are to assure these “few that be saved” (Luke 13:23) that Christ is returning to rapture them out of this world before God’s judgment falls upon it. Far from expecting Christianity to become the prevailing belief system in this world, we know that “the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness” (1 Corinthians 1:18) and that those who perish, sadly enough, represent the overwhelming majority:

Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because strait is the gate and narrow the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it (Matthew 7:13-14).

Knowing that most of those he encountered would reject the gospel of Christ did not discourage Paul from preaching this gospel; rather it increased his determination to win as many as he could. The love that caused Christ to die for those who hated and rejected Him (and even for those who crucified Him) “constrained” Paul to carry the message of that love to the world of his day (2 Corinthians 5:14)—and to warn them of the eternal consequences of rejecting Christ. “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord [in judgment],” Paul wrote,

“we persuade men” (2 Corinthians 5:11). Driven by Christ’s love and his own passion for the lost, Paul declared:

I am made all things to all men that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel’s sake (1 Corinthians 9:22-23).

We ought to do the same. Although apostasy must come before Christ’s return, and deception and seduction will grow worse and false prophets increase in number and influence, that is not an excuse for any true Christian to become discouraged or to lessen his efforts to win the lost. Christ’s parable of the ten virgins (“At midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him”—Matthew 25:1-13) indicates an awakening even among those who have “slumbered and slept” while “the bridegroom tarried.” And his parable of the “man [who] made a great supper, and bade many” (Luke 14:16-24) indicates that alongside the last-days apostasy there will also be perhaps the most fruitful time of evangelism in history:

Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the Lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled (Luke 14:21-23).

MAKING AN ESSENTIAL CHOICE

Heaven was both the great hope that Christ left with His disciples and an integral part of the gospel preached by the early church. Christ told His disciples, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth... but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven... for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:19-21). While we ought to demonstrate genuine concern and to work to restore ecological wholeness, we must also remember that every solution to earth’s problems which is not founded upon

the lordship of Jesus Christ and the forgiveness of sins we have in Him is temporary at best and ultimately doomed to fail. Paul cites as evidence of the Thessalonians’ newfound faith not only their “work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope” and the fact that they had “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,” but also that they were “wait[ing] for his Son from heaven” (1 Thessalonians 1:3-10). John reminds us of the importance of expecting Christ’s imminent return: “Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:3).

The very heart of the gospel calls people to make a choice between earth and heaven. Christ made this clear. He told the Jews, “Ye are from beneath, I am from above; ye are of this world, I am not of this world.” He warned them, “Except ye believe that I am, ye shall die in your sins, and where I go ye cannot come.” Where was He going? To heaven, a place which He referred to as “my Father’s house.” A well-known Puritan author said, “The most dangerous mistake of our souls is to take the creature for God and earth for heaven.”²¹ Schlossberg adds this wise comment: “Ironically, those who seek their ultimate value in the next world are the only ones able to do much good in this one.”²²

Making temporary solutions to social problems the overriding concern of Christians blunts the gospel and obscures God’s eternal solution. The focus is turned from heaven to this earth, from a new universe that only God can create to a new world that we hope to fashion by our own efforts. It is just one more form of the selfism that plagues society and the church, another way of becoming little gods, of turning from Him to ourselves by assuming a responsibility to do what only He can do. It is easy to be caught up in a “good” cause that isn’t biblical. We cannot be reminded too often that we must check against the Word of God what even the most popular and seemingly fruitful Christian leaders teach. It is the responsibility of each Christian to stand firmly for the truth without compromise, heeding the words of Paul:

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine...and they shall turn away their ears from the truth (2 Timothy 4:2-4).

SOUND DOCTRINE AND UNDERSTANDING

There are many who call themselves Christians and attend Christian churches but deny Christ with their lives. Of course they need to recognize their self-centeredness and lack of concern and compassion for others. The solution, however, is not for such persons to reform their lives. Such an attempt represents a Christianized form of humanism and can only produce either guilt, frustration, or self-righteousness. Those who practice self-sacrifice and self-abnegation in order to help the poor and oppressed can become Pharisees also, looking down upon others who don't live that way and taking pride in their own seeming humility. As we have already noted, Christ did not teach self-denial (self still on the throne but giving up much of what it might enjoy), but *denial of self* (the death of self) through His cross. He didn't say, "Except you deny yourself you cannot be my disciple," but "Except you deny yourself *and take up the cross* and follow me you cannot be my disciple." Without the cross self can never be denied.

No less important than the way we live is what we *believe*. As Schlossberg rightly says: "Action cannot be separated from the belief that gives rise to it."²³ There is no value to the way we live, no matter how exemplary it may seem, unless our lives are founded not upon *pragmatism* but upon God's *truth*. When Paul reminded Timothy of the example of Christian living he had set for the church, he mentioned first of all the *doctrine* that determined his life: "Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions..." (2 Timothy 3:10-11). We live what we *believe*, not what we profess

to believe. Our manner of life betrays our true faith, and faith depends upon our understanding of the One whose promises we believe.

This is why the Bible places much emphasis upon *understanding*. Speaking through Jeremiah, God said, "Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he *understandeth and knoweth me*, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the LORD" (Jeremiah 9:24). God wants us to *understand* who He is: infinite in love, yet no less just and righteous. He wants us to *know* Him intimately. And we can know and love God only for who He is, not for what we imagine Him to be. Moreover, we must come to Him on His terms and obey His truth. Explaining the parable of the seed that was carried away by the birds before it could take root, Jesus said:

Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When anyone heareth the word of the kingdom and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart (Matthew 13:18-19).

One of the greatest problems within the church today is superficiality. We too often fail to make certain that those who are called upon "to decide for Christ" fully understand the decision they are being asked to make. We often build to an emotional climax as a means of persuading people to make a "decision." There is nothing wrong with emotion that accompanies reality, but we must be careful not to encourage a commitment to Christ that is founded upon emotion and not upon an understanding of and commitment to the truth of who He really is, why He came, and what He demands of us.

When our Lord called Saul of Tarsus to preach the gospel, He sent him forth to do three things that we must also do if those to whom we witness for Christ are truly to be saved: "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto

God...” (Acts 26:18). Only then, Christ clearly told Paul, could those who hear the message “receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.” The emphasis throughout Scripture, and to which the church must return today, is clearly placed upon truth and *understanding*. So John writes:

We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols (1 John 5:20-21).

FAITH AND UNDERSTANDING

A lack of this necessary *understanding* was apparently the problem with those of whom we read, “As he spoke these words, many believed on him” (John 8:30). Although they “believed,” their “faith” in Christ was not based upon a clear understanding of who He was and what He came to do. In fact, they were resistant to the truth when He tried to present it to them. Christ had to say to “those Jews which believed on him”:

Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do: he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not (John 8:43-45).

On another occasion “many believed in his name when they saw the miracles which he did” (John 2:23). On the surface that sounds so good, yet “Jesus did not commit himself unto them because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man” (John 2:23-25). He knew that although the miracles had convinced them that He was the Messiah, yet they did not *understand*

the real reason for the Messiah’s coming. They may have been like those in John 6 who wanted to make Christ their king by force so that He would heal and feed them, but who were not willing to let Him reign as Lord of their lives.

In contrast to these men to whom Christ would not commit Himself, the next verse begins with these words: “There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus...” (John 3:1). Here we are given an insight into where the others erred. Like those who “believed on him,” Nicodemus was convinced that Jesus was “a teacher come from God” who did miracles not “by Beelzebub the prince of the devils,” as the other Pharisees claimed (Matthew 12:24), but through the power of God (John 3:2). However, that was not enough, and we have the famous passage concerning being “born again” as Christ helps Nicodemus understand the truth he must know in order to be saved from eternal judgment:

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him (John 3:3,6,16,17,36).

Being a Christian does not come about through superficial belief in the existence of a historical Person named Jesus of Nazareth who did miracles and taught sublime truths. It involves personally receiving Him into one’s heart and life as Savior and Lord and believing that He died for one’s sins and rose from the dead. This is the gospel (good news) which, if truly believed, will transform one’s life. Genuine faith is based upon *understanding* and results in *obedience*. Acts 6:7 tells us that “a great company of the priests were *obedient*

to the faith.” Paul preached “*obedience* to the faith among all nations” (Romans 1:5; 16:26) and warned of the judgment that would one day come upon all who “*know* not God and that *obey* not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 1:8). This is why Jesus said:

If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (John 8:31-32).

This freedom is not produced by semantics. The attempt to bring peace to all men by promoting the myth of “universal brotherhood” is doomed by the fact that we are *not* all brothers therefore serious differences exist. It is axiomatic that there is no real brotherhood of man without the Fatherhood of God. And Jesus made it clear that no man is a child of God unless

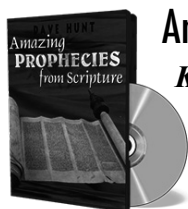
he has been “born again” by the Spirit of God into the family of God. Until then, Jesus said, we are the children of our “father the devil” and reflect his evil character in our attitude and actions toward God and one another.

FOOTNOTES

21. Cho, *Fourth*, p. 23.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 59.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

***NOTE: *Beyond Seduction* by Dave Hunt is currently out of print with extremely limited copies available through used book sellers. TBC covets your prayers as we consider reprinting this classic book.**

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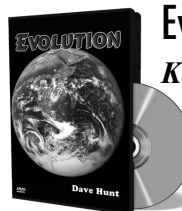
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