

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The Word and Work



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

MARCH, 1995

THE OLD TESTAMENT IS GOD'S WORD TOO

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THE GREATNESS OF CHILDREN

By Irving D. Larson

D. L. Moody is said to have once returned from a meeting with a report of "two and one-half conversions." "I suppose you mean two adults and one child," said the man who was his host. "No," said Mr. Moody, "I mean two children and one adult. You see, the children can give their whole lives to God, but the adult has only half of his life left to give."

How true this is! Suppose that Paul had been converted at seventy instead of twenty-five. There would have been no Paul in history. There was a Matthew Henry because he was converted at the age of eleven, and not at seventy. There was a Jonathan Edwards because he was converted at eight and not at eighty. And there was a Richard Baxter because he was converted at six instead of sixty.

The vast majority of men and women on the mission fields today, as well as those who are filling pastorates all over our land, are those who were converted while they were young. We must never make the mistake of treating lightly the salvation of the children, for herein lies the secret of preserving their lives for God's service. Remember the emphasis of Jesus, both on our concern for the children, and also the necessity of our having a childlike spirit in our approach to Him.

-- Gallatin bulletin

THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

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THEME:

THE OLD TESTAMENT IS GOD'S WORD TOO!

Introduction to This Issue:

H. L. Olmstead once wrote in *W&W*, "We need to *read the Bible more*, and we need to *read more of the Bible*." And he was right. In an effort to get us out of the rut of reading only our favorite chapters and books while avoiding vast sections of God's Word, both the March and April issues will focus on the Old Testament. For without doubt that is the part we read least.

Hey, wait—STOP! *Don't* lay me down! Honest, I'm brim full and running over with valuable insights that'll do you good and help you too! This month there are splendid lessons gleaned from Genesis, and God's Old Covenant Law (2 articles), and Psalms (2 articles), and a short challenge from an OT prophet.

Then next month several of the prophets will be featured, including a first-time special interview. A great man of God, whose identity we'll not reveal at this time, made an astonishing visit to a U.S. church recently and shared his testimony. It will encourage you. And so will this month's articles. --The Editor

FOUR TYPICAL PAIRS

R. H. Boll

The Bible reveals God to man and man to himself. Its searching rays lay bare the heart. Its character-pictures are marvelous. You will not read long nor far before you find *yourself* in the old book. "It is the book with a million eyes," said a noted man, "and it looks you through and through." The Author of that book knows me, and you, and all men. (Psalm 139)

In Genesis we find in the course of narrative the portrayal of four pairs of characters, each two a contrast, under which all religious humanity is classified. They are as follows:

Cain and Abel. These represent two ways of approach to God: the one in self-will, the other by faith: the one coming by God's

way, by God-appointed sacrifice; the other following his own mind and taste, bringing a bloodless offering. These represent two types of religion. (Gen. 4, Heb. 11:4)

Abraham and Lot. They journeyed together for a while, but their inward principles were diametrically opposite. For the sake of God's promise Abraham left his home and went forth to the land which he was to receive for an inheritance; "and he went out not knowing whither he went." Lot went with Abraham. But the inevitable separation came. Abraham continued, a stranger and pilgrim on earth, looking for the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. But Lot "pitched his tent toward Sodom," and at last settled down in that notable and notorious city. These are two types of religious life. (Gen. 13)

Isaac and Ishmael. Both were Abraham's children, but one by a bond-maid; the other by a free woman; the one born after the flesh, in the course and power of nature; the other after the Spirit, in the power of the Divine promise. They illustrate the difference between the fleshly-religious, and those who have been "born of God". (Gen. 17:15-21; Gal. 4:21-31)

"The brook, though changing weather, bed and course,

Remains that brook: It cannot change its source."

Esau and Jacob. The prophecy concerning these two "the elder shall serve the younger," and "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," had reference not to the two individual men, but to the two nations descended from them. Both Esau and Jacob had evil traits. If anything Esau's was the more pleasant character. But he was a man of the flesh, controlled by his passions and appetites, and he willingly sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. The redeeming feature in Jacob's life was his faith. God's promise was his greatest desire. Through many trials, toils and chastenings, God led him to his desired haven at last.

Among these four pairs is your case described? If it should be found on the wrong side must it be so? And must it so remain? There is no fatalism in the matter to us. If you have been Cain, you can by the grace of God draw nigh by the blood of Christ, which speaketh better things than that of Abel. If you have left the pilgrim's path and turned aside to settle in Sodom, return, and you may walk again in the steps of the faith of Abraham.

QUESTIONS ASKED OF US

Carl Kitzmiller

Does obedience to parents really bestow long life?

Included in the ten commandments is the admonition, "Honor thy father and thy mother," and the promise, "That thy days may be long in the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee" (Exod. 20:12). The apostle Paul, in Ephesians (6:2-3), urges upon his hearers the honoring of parents and repeats the promise, slightly changed, "That thou mayest live long on the earth." The Old Testament commandment, given to the people of Israel, promised long life in the land promised to the Jew. As an inspired man Paul is used by the Holy Spirit to make the slight change, promising long life on the earth.

It is not difficult to see how, without any direct intervention from God, this principle would work to confer long life. Parents were meant to provide guidance to children, and this often involves restraint on youthful follies that would shorten many a life. In spite of the glorification of youth and the despising of the wisdom of the past ages which is so prevalent today, there is generally a natural benefit bestowed on those who do not have to experience everything for themselves. I can think of several youths who have died as a result of disobedience to parental instruction.

Perhaps our greatest problem with this promise comes from what seems to be the exceptions. Do all very old people attain those years because of obedience to parents? Do all who die early do so because of disobedience? Clearly this is not the case. Some die in infancy before obedience is an issue. Some very ungodly people may attain ripe years. While this is a principle of God's dealings with us, it is not His only guiding principle. Many other factors enter into His will, and we must not set these aside. This should be seen as a general rule, not as a mechanical and certain way to long life. Jesus died in early manhood because God's will for Him was something other than long life in the flesh. So we must not foolishly equate every early death with disobedience, nor every long life with obedience. But do not forget that this is a part of the whole. Obedience and honor to parents will improve one's chances of long life.

DOES THE LAW OF MOSES APPLY TO CHRISTIANS?

David R. Reagan

This question has prompted fierce debate and sharp division within the Body of Christ. Churches have divided over it. New denominations have been formed as a result of it.

I receive at least one letter every week from a Seventh Day Adventist radio listener who tries to prove to me that the Law of Moses requires Christians to observe the Sabbath. Others write to encourage me to teach that Christians should observe the dietary rules of the Law, eating only kosher foods.

The attempt to apply the Law of Moses to contemporary professing Christians seems to be particularly popular among cultic groups, probably because it fits in so well with their legalistic approach whereby they try to control all the activities of their members. At the opposite extreme are the liberal theologians who tend to dismiss the Law as nothing more than "the tribal rules of a tribal god."

My Personal Heritage

When I was growing up, the church I was a member of taught that the Law of Moses was "imperfect" and thus had to be replaced by "the perfect Law of Christ." This assertion made me wonder how a perfect God could give an imperfect Law? I became even more confused when I noted that in the New Testament the Apostle Paul refers to the Law as "holy" (Romans 7:12) and "good" (1 Timothy 1:8). And Jesus Himself said He had not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17).

Our preachers were forever emphasizing that the Law had been "nailed to the Cross" and was thus invalidated by the death of Jesus. Unfortunately, they went even further, for they identified the Law with the Old Testament. They therefore argued that all the Hebrew Scriptures--the entire Old Testament--had been abrogated by the Cross.

We declared ourselves to be "a New Testament Church," and we considered the Old Testament to be inappropriate for serious study. We equated the Bible with the New Testament, and many of us did not even own a complete Bible. We had only a New Testament, with the Psalms added as a sort of devotional appendix. We viewed the Old Testament as a quaint story book to be used solely for the purpose of teaching children stories like Noah and the Ark.

A Reservoir of Ignorance

I have since discovered that this deprecating attitude toward the Old Testament is widespread within Christendom. The result is that most Christians are biblically ignorant regarding the content of the Hebrew Scriptures. Most would be embarrassed if they were asked to find the book of Hezekiah. They would be even more embarrassed to discover that there is no such book! This is a sad situation because the New Testament cannot be understood apart from the Old.

One result of this ignorance of the Old Testament is a grievous lack of knowledge concerning the Jewish roots of Christianity. Most Christians seem to be oblivious to the fact that the early church was composed entirely of Jews and that it was therefore thoroughly Jewish in its worship and customs.

I'm certain that most Christians would be surprised to learn that Paul was speaking of the Old Testament when he wrote the following words to Timothy: "... from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15). Paul had to be talking about what we call the Old Testament because the New Testament did not even exist when he wrote those words.

Ignorance of the Hebrew Scriptures is also one of the most important reasons why there is so much confusion within the Christian community today regarding Bible prophecy. Take the book of Revelation for example. How can that book possibly be understood apart from the book of Daniel when the two fit together like a hand in a glove?

Or consider the fact that the book of Revelation contains more than 300 references to the Old Testament Scriptures, and not a one of those references is identified. A good example is the theme of the book. It is expressed in Revelation 1:7 where the reader is told that the Messiah is going to return in the clouds and those who pierced Him will see Him and mourn over Him. That verse is constructed from two Old Testament passages that are put end-to-end, one from Daniel 7 and the other from Zechariah 12.

The Meaning of the Law

The first point we all need to keep in mind is that the Law of Moses and the Old Testament are not synonymous. The Law of Moses constitutes only a small part of the Hebrew Scriptures. If the Law of Moses was nailed to the Cross, that nailing certainly did not include the Old Testament histories, the wisdom literature, or the prophetic books.

But was the Law itself, constituting most of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, invalidated by the Cross? Or, were only portions of it annulled--like the civil and ceremonial laws? What about the moral law as expressed in the Ten Commandments? Does it apply to Christians? And, if so, does that mean we should observe the Sabbath?

A Law for Israel Only

The fundamental point that must be kept in mind is that the Law of Moses was given to the nation of Israel and not to Gentiles or the Church (Deuteronomy 4:7-8; Psalm 147:19-20; and Malachi 4:4).

The Jews recognized this clearly in their oral law that was later catalogued in the Talmud. In their view, Gentiles were subject to the commandments of the Noahic Law, the law given to Noah after the flood. Those commandments are recorded in Genesis 9:1-17.

From those verses the rabbis drew seven laws for the Gentile nations. The first was an authorization of human government, with capital punishment required for the crime of murder. The other six laws consisted of prohibitions against blasphemy, idolatry, sexual impurity, theft, the eating of blood, and the devouring of a limb of an animal without killing it.

After the establishment of the Church, the issue of the application of the Law of Moses arose when Gentiles began to accept the Gospel. Should these new converts be required to obey the Law of Moses, including the rite of circumcision?

The issue was so important that a church conference was called in Jerusalem to debate the matter. After extensive discussion, it was decided that the Gentiles should not be "troubled" with the observance of the Mosaic Law except for four rules (Acts 15:1-29).

The rules selected were abstinence from fornication and abstinence from the eating of blood, things sacrificed to idols, and things strangulated (Acts 15:20,29). All of these prohibitions had been included in the Noahic Law for the Gentiles that preceded the Law of Moses. So, Gentile converts to Christianity were not subjected to any laws that were unique to the Mosaic system.

A Temporary Law

Another foundational point is that the Law of Moses constituted a temporary system. God never intended it to be permanent.

The other covenants that God made with Israel--the Abrahamic, Davidic, and Land covenants--are all declared to be "everlasting" (Genesis 17:7; 2 Samuel 23:5; and Psalms 105:8-11). The Mosaic Law is never classified in Scripture as eternal. In fact, Jeremiah prophesied that it would be replaced by a "new covenant."

"Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers . . . My covenant which they broke . . ." --Jeremiah 31:31-32

In the very next chapter, Jeremiah proclaims that this "new covenant" will be an "everlasting one" (Jeremiah 32: 40). This New Covenant is the one that was mediated by the blood of Jesus. The writer of the Hebrew letter affirms that it invalidated the Mosaic Covenant (Hebrews 8: 1-13 and 9: 15-16) and that it is eternal in nature (Hebrews 13: 20).

A Total Abrogation

The annulment of the Mosaic Law was total in nature. The Bible never speaks of portions of the Law being "carried over" into the New Covenant. As the Hebrew writer reminds us, the giving of the New Covenant "has made the first obsolete" (Hebrews 8:13).

This includes even the Ten Commandments, as Paul makes clear in 2 Corinthians 3: 6-9. In that passage Paul states that we are "servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit, for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life". He then refers to the "letters engraved on stones" as a "ministry of death" (verse 7) and a "ministry of condemnation" (verse 9).

The "letters engraved on stones" is a direct reference to the Ten Commandments. Those were the only commandments in the Law of Moses that were written on stone by the finger of God. All the rest of the remaining 603 commands were written down by Moses at the instruction of God.

Does this mean the Ten Commandments are no longer applicable to Christians? Not necessarily. It means that as part of the Law of Moses they no longer apply. But any of them that are incorporated in the Law of Christ do apply--and the fact of the matter is that nine of the ten have been included in the New Covenant and have even been expanded to cover our thought life (see for example, Matthew 5: 21-48). The only one that is not mentioned in the New Covenant is the command to keep the Sabbath.

An Illustration

The best explanation I have ever run across of the relationship between the Law of Moses and the New Covenant of Jesus is one I found recently in an article by the Messianic Jewish evangelist and scholar, Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum. Here's how he illustrated the relationship:

I received my first driver's license in the state of California. As long as I drove in California, I was subject to the traffic laws of that state. But two years later I moved to New York.

Once I left California, I ceased to be under California's traffic laws. The traffic laws of that state were rendered inoperative in my case. Now my driving was subject to a new law--the traffic laws of the state of New York.

There were many laws that were different. In California I was permitted to make a right turn at a red light after stopping and yielding the right-of-way. But in New York this was not permitted.

On the other hand, there were many similar laws between the two states, such as the edict to stop at red lights. However, when I stopped for a red light in New York, I did not do so in obedience to the state of California as I once had, but in obedience to the state of New York. Likewise, if I went through a red light without stopping, I was not guilty of breaking California law but New York law. Many laws were similar, but they were, nevertheless, under two distinctly different systems.

This illustration should make it clear what I mean when I say that the Law of Moses has been nullified and that we are now under the Law of Christ. The two laws have many different commandments. For example, under the Law of Moses the eating of pork was forbidden. The Law of Christ permits it. But there are also similar commandments. Thus, both prohibit adultery and theft. But if you commit adultery, you stand guilty of violating the Law of Christ, not the Law of Moses.

Freedom in Christ

So, the answer to our original question. "Does the Law of Moses apply to Christians?" is that Christians are free from the necessity of keeping any of the commands of the Mosaic Law. But, it is very important to keep in mind that Christians have the freedom in Christ to observe portions of the Mosaic Law if they so please.

This point is what Romans 14 is all about. That chapter makes it clear that a Christian has the freedom to observe or not observe the

Jewish feast days and dietary laws. Paul wrote that chapter, and he practiced it by observing the Sabbath, the feast days, the laws pertaining to vows and the purification laws. Yet, he did not try to enforce these observances upon other Christians.

Like Paul, many Messianic Jews today observe various portions of the Law of Moses. They have the freedom in the Messiah to do so. But they must be cautious that they do not carry their observance too far. Here is how Dr. Fruchtenbaum expresses that caution:

There are two dangers that must be avoided by the Messianic Jew who chooses to keep portions of the Law of Moses.

One is the belief that one who does so is contributing to his own justification and sanctification. This is false and must be avoided. The second danger is that one may demand or expect others to also keep the Law. This is equally wrong and borders on legalism.

The one who exercises his freedom to keep the Law must recognize and respect another's freedom not to do the same.

The Words of Jesus

Some of you at this point may be wondering what Jesus meant when He said in His sermon on the mount in Galilee, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). How can these words be reconciled with my conclusion that the Law has been abolished?

The answer is so obvious that it is hard to see. The Law of Moses did not end with the coming of Jesus or with the initiation of His ministry--but with His death. As long as Jesus lived, He--as a Jew--was under the Mosaic Law and was obligated to fulfill it, which He did perfectly. But when He died, He became the testator of a New Covenant that completely replaced the Old.

The Question of Salvation

One final point--many people are under the mistaken impression that a different way of salvation existed under the Law of Moses. The argument usually goes this way: under the Mosaic Law salvation was obtained by obedience to the Law; whereas today, under the New Covenant, salvation is by grace through faith.

Obedience to the Law never saved anyone; first, because it was impossible to obey the Law perfectly, and second, because the sacrifice of animals was insufficient to atone for human sin.

The law served as a tutor to prepare people for the coming of the Messiah (Galatians 3:24). It did this first of all by convicting people of their sins. Second, it motivated them in this sin-consciousness to look for a Messiah who would shed his blood to atone for their sins.

-- From Lamb and Lion Lamplighter

PUT SOME SOUL IN YOUR RELIGION

Dennis Crawford

Our restoration movement was born in a flurry of logic, incisive arguments, and clear thinking. There were steps to salvation and separate acts of worship. Now I'm not one to discount logic and clear thinking--and I wouldn't cast a vote for brainless emotionalism. But often, in the secret of my study (a logical place to be), I get this feeling (can I trust it?) that every once in a while we need to go back and touch our emotional roots.

And that's when I turn to the hymn book of the Old Testament--the heart of the Bible--the Psalms. Words that are difficult to translate such as "maskil," "selah" and "miktam" may reach out and do their best to discourage our reading. But when we get past those unfamiliar words and get into the text, we know we're near the heart of someone who speaks our language and has stumbled around in our shoes. The writer talks of faith, joy, fear, trust, praise--even settling with his enemies. Talk about emotion--the Psalms run the gamut of feelings, all the way from ecstatic praise, to faithlessness, to brain-numbing, sit-and-stare-at-the-wall depression.

Yes, God commissioned some faithful (well, mostly faithful) men in the Old Testament to reveal their feelings. Not just the "religious," pure, acceptable feelings, but the ones that churned down deep inside them, the feelings that crept in during those last few minutes before sleep overcame them at night. The result of this inspired heart-bearing is one hundred and fifty poems that say out loud, "It's all right to feel, God accepts you and your 'heart,' too."

The psalmist often voiced unacceptable feelings, such as, "Lord, please destroy my (our) enemies before they destroy me," and, "O, God, break the teeth in their mouths Let them be like the snail that dissolves into slime." Now there's a couple of verses (58:6-8--and there are many more where they came from) we never ask anyone to memorize and recite in Bible class. No, I don't recommend that you pray like that in the presence of others--but isn't it honest? And who hasn't felt that way, at least for a nanosecond or two?

With his words, the Psalm writer, with his heart turned wrong-side-out, proved he didn't have God in a neat little box. His faith wasn't all logical and cerebral. "I was envious of the wicked My faith almost failed." Those aren't feelings you would want to stand up in the middle of Sunday morning worship and express. And okay, even if you've entertained some of those thoughts, you wouldn't write a hymn and use such thoughts for lyrics, would you? Neither would I. But the ancient songwriter did. And by doing this he says, "Look, this is the way people--even faithful people--feel sometimes."

Some feelings are too shocking, raw, unthinkable and personal to admit--we think.

"I cried all night last night, Lord."

"Lord, where are you. Don't you hear my prayers?"

"I'm in such pain. I can feel every bone in my body."

"I have almost lost my faith, and on top of that I envy the wicked."

The book of Psalms is the answer to the question, "Where can I go if I'm suffering from less than Christian thoughts?" The answer? "Take them to God." And if you need a model, let these songs take you on a tour de force of feelings.

Oh yes, there are songs in the Psalms for all seasons. At the other end of the emotional spectrum he says, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." And he had the audacity to write, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." But as you can see, on his faith-journey he is often on the emotional roller coaster (with occasional rides on the emotional merry-go-round).

Who wrote with such honesty? Such candor?

David wrote many--but not all--of the Psalms. And of all the other writers David was the most qualified to write poetry that touches the twenty-first century heart. In the course of his life, he killed an over-sized, loud-mouth who hooted at God's army, soothed a half-mad king with his songs, lived an outlaw life with a rag-tag group of misfits, wore the king of Israel's crown, and as if he couldn't stand the success, almost self-destructed after he had gotten to the top. David not only coveted his neighbor's wife, but took her, and then he killed his neighbor (and along the way broke--or seriously bent--most of the Ten Commandments.) To top it off, David suffered gross family problems all the way to the grave due to his adultery, murder and poor judgment.

Yes, David's life was problem-city. but then life is messy--nobody's life comes in neat, sterile packages. If his emotions resonate with ours it's because he wrote about the real world. Our world.

David went from a nobody in a hick town to the palace and then to the pits. But the upside of his problems is this: in the middle of his ups and downs, spiritual detours, and ins and outs he still wrote songs, prayers and poetry to God. Like the country song writer who writes of cheating, pain and brokenness, David picked up his stylus and put life into words. And don't you love him for it?

Oh sure, some may judge him harshly, and we probably wouldn't want to make him a deacon; but David--the Bible says--in spite of it all, was a man after God's own heart. I think that means he wanted to know what was on God's mind so that he could--in his all too human way--follow him more closely. At the same time, as many of the Psalms show, he wasn't ashamed to tell God what was on his mind. Consequently, David's songs are full of heart and emotion.

We can thank God for Paul who could write straight, logical letters such as Romans and Galatians (which, by the way, contain some heart, too). Paul wrote good arguments and used solid logic to explain our salvation to us. But I also thank God for David who could write and pray "out loud."

We, in restoration churches, who approach our faith in logical, rational ways, sometimes skitter out of balance in the head/heart department. We need David's songs and prayers. Yes, in the privacy of our homes, in our prayer closets, we may need to express some of the honest feelings David expressed. That would be okay.

Because we need to think *and* feel.

--From IMAGE Magazine, with permission.

Invited

Paul Fromer

A lot of the psalms were written because David was scared, and the 27th is no exception. As we look in on him, he's begun to calm down, but his fear is still evident.

"Give me not up to the will of my adversaries . . . they breathe out violence."

In this 27th psalm David is showing his knack for weakness. He was no infallible Sherlock Holmes, and was wise enough to admit it. Not that he was a hopeless incompetent compared with other men. Rather he was more able than most--a clever general, born leader of men, strong minded administrator. But he was also a realist, so he knew that life was too big for him. And he knew that God was not a vacuous Ground of all Being but someone to be reckoned with--and relied upon.

In verse one David states his conviction that since God is the light, salvation and stronghold of his life, fear is illogical. I think he said this while he was afraid. *His emotional view of God was struggling with his mental view and needed to be told what was what.*

In verse two and elsewhere David follows his policy of listing the things that worry him. In this psalm they are the slander and violence threatened by his enemies. We ourselves might add unconfessed sin, disinterest in God, uncertainty about marriage, fear of low grades, confusion about our life work. David specifically identifies his pressures, specifically relates them to God's character, specifically asks God for help. Try his procedure, and see how God uses it to give you relief.

But David's interest in God did not center solely in his need for help. The simple fact is that David liked God. Even if he hadn't needed help, he'd still have been a man who prayed a lot. "One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." Notice that he's not motivated by fear of men but by the attraction of the Lord Himself. You and I also need a glimpse of God's "beauty."

We normally use the term in an aesthetic sense and think of sunsets, vases, women. But, here David was probably thinking of the delightfulness of God. When he saw it he was moved to adore God, and be satisfied. Yet David had the doubts of an ordinary man and often wondered if God could care enough to reveal His excellence to any man, especially a sinful one. Even today in the age after the

cross, we have similar doubts. This is why David reminds himself that the Lord has said, "Seek ye my face."

This is one of Scripture's great verses. *Here is the majestic God graciously saying, "Seek me." He invites our fellowship (and at a cost only He knew, in David's day.)*

Jesus said, "The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him." We needn't be afraid that we're unable or unfit to respond to His invitation. It was made even to a hard-bitten prostitute in Samaria. And she sought Him only because He sought her first.

So to His "Seek me," our response should be David's, "Thy face, Lord, do I seek." And if our longing to see His beauty is tinged with fear that He just can't mean His invitation, it's proper to add, "Hide not thy face from me." It's always important to be honest with God, especially when we begin to see the grandeur of His invitation and find our faith dwarfed by it.

Does a longing for God, a desire to "dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life" lead to monastic isolation from life? No. As with David, so with us. He found his longing met by God in the midst of a busy life. David was a doer, largely because of the release God gave him as they communed together. Dwelling in the Lord's house is figurative and refers to spending time in God's presence. Surely in this psalm David isn't facing the type of problem that comes to the recluse. Threats of slander and violence come to the man who is involved, and standing firmly for righteousness.

Our pressures today likewise stem from a busy life. We wouldn't want it otherwise. Christ does not pray in John 17 that we be taken out of the world, but that we be kept from the evil one, Satan and his brood.

Having listed his troubles and asked for help, and having reaffirmed his deliberate intent to seek God's face, David concludes with the declaration, "I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." And that leads him to advise us to "wait for the Lord."

Patience is a result of faith.

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Why Read the Old Testament?

Carl Armerding

In today's world with its quest for the immediate, the relevant and the pragmatic, the Old Testament often seems far-removed from the action. The repetition of its historical sequences, the seeming irrelevance of its ceremonial laws and the foreignness of its poetry all combine to make it, for many, a closed book. The New Testament, after all, gives the heart of our faith and all the instruction we really need to live in an apocalyptic age.

Such an attitude is in sharp contrast to the approach of the great apostle Paul. The latter reminds his young disciple, Timothy, that "all scripture is inspired by God and profitable . . ." (2 Timothy 3:15), and when we consider the fact that Paul's primary reference is to the Old Testament--the New didn't exist yet as such--the force of the statement increases. If Timothy was called to cut his spiritual teeth in the Old Testament Scriptures (though he had been doing just this long before becoming a Christian) they must surely have something for us today. If the Old Testament was truly inspired, or God-breathed, then it too must have that quality that speaks to every age.

That the New Testament writers were convinced of its vitality and meaning is clear. Over a thousand times in the New Testament we find direct references to the Old. Obviously the New Testament writers were steeped in its teaching. Why then do contemporary Christians find it such a difficult book?

Obstacles to Understanding

We must face this problem squarely. Barriers do exist, not only to ease of reading but to understanding. Nothing short of a clear appreciation of why we don't read the Old Testament will provide the starting point for overcoming the problem.

Perhaps the greatest hindrance is the very foreign background of the Old Testament. Its geography and history, in both of which it abounds, are the geography and history of a world far removed from us. (Our western civilization courses cover the ancient Near East in a couple days, the sooner to get on to the Greeks and Romans!) The laws, the customs, the ritual worship, the thought-forms, all seem curiously out of date. Indeed, most of them seem to have arisen within an agricultural society inhabited by a people fresh from the desert who came with a most distasteful habit of slaughtering animals in some happily-forgotten kind of ritual.

But there are additional barriers. There appears to be little order in the sequence of books. The sheer weight of material (three times

the length of the New Testament) is frightening. There is no immediately discernable, unifying concept. The book is filled with foreign literary forms: all manner of poetry, none of it even rhyming, laments genealogies, short proverbs, long parables and much more that offends our desire for a straightforward, "scientific" description of how things are.

On top of this, the Old Testament seems committed to a number of difficult ethical and religious concepts. Deuteronomy 20 gives rules for holy war--are they normative in Christian faith and practice? Numbers 5 affirms a kind of trial by ordeal--do we, in obedience to God, resurrect some kind of Salem witchcraft trials? No easy answer presents itself.

With barriers such as these, why bother with the Old Testament? Let us turn to the values of such a study and perhaps after listing the "pros," the "cons" may no longer appear so formidable.

Values of Knowing the Old Covenant Scriptures

Foremost is the fact that almost every important concept in the New Testament has its roots in the Old. To know the nature of the New Covenant (1 Corinthians 11, Hebrews 8 and 10) you have to be aware of the Old (Jeremiah 31 etc.). To follow Paul's argument about a remnant (Romans 9) you will have to trace the idea through the Old Testament. A definition of Jesus' enigmatic "Son of Man" terminology will carry you back to Daniel 7. Some feel for our Lord's servant role can only come from the Suffering Servant image in Isaiah 40-55. The Day of the Lord, proclaimed by Paul in 1, 2 Thessalonians, has its roots in Joel and Amos. The theological argument that sees humanity united in the First Adam and re-united in a Second Adam is based on Old Testament genealogies that show the unity of the human family. Even Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is set by Matthew in the context of a re-interpretation of the laws at Sinai. And the pervasive "Kingdom of God," the main theme of the synoptic gospels, comes straight from Old Testament images about a royal messianic age. Finally (and the list is by no means exhaustive), the whole New Testament theme of redemption is consciously built on what happened to Israel in their exodus from Egypt. These ideas and many more derive from a book which for many of us is closed. Small wonder that our understanding of the revelation in Jesus Christ is so fragile and inadequate.

But there are other values in a study of the Old Testament. Important as it is as a preparation for the New, the Old Testament has a value all its own. Without it we will never fully comprehend the basic linear way of looking at history that sets Judeo-Christian thinkers apart from their pagan counterparts. From the Old Testament we

learn that history has both a commencement and a consummation. The world has meaning and the world order, though marred by sin, has structure. It is going somewhere. Life is not "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." Rather it is part of a process pregnant with significance, and issuing ultimately in a new creation and the Kingdom of God.

In the Old Testament we find the beginning of the historical sequence, the choice of a people, the creation of institutions, the revelation of purpose, the communication of hope and the yearning for fulfillment. When, in Jesus Christ, we see all the hopes materialize, we miss the point if we have not learned to hope with Israel and to feel and see and know what she felt and saw and knew along the road of redemption. With such a reward in view, the difficulties, however large they loom, should not deter us.

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CAN I UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE?

Alex V. Wilson

Yes, you can, by prayerful dependence on God's Spirit and by following certain principles of interpretation. The latter are based either upon common sense or upon the teaching of the Bible itself. Last month we saw four of these principles. (1) Interpret according to the *purpose* of each passage. E.g., Luke 18:1-8 does not mean that God is an unjust judge whom we must beg, cajole and plead with before He will answer our prayers. No, Christ's purpose in telling this parable is revealed in verse 1: "Men ought always to pray and not lose heart." God is *not* like the judge in the story, but we *should* be like the woman, and persevere in intercession. (2) Interpret according to the *context*, both the immediate context and the overall context of the entire Bible. E.g., Acts 2, 4 and 5 show that the early church in Jerusalem practiced communism, i.e., community of goods. Should all Christians everywhere follow their example today? No (though God may lead *some* to do so), for 1 Tim. 6:17ff contains Paul's instruction to rich disciples, and neither there nor elsewhere does he tell them to sell or give away all their possessions. He urges them to be generous, and earnestly warns them of the dangers of riches, but goes no further.

Someone wrote, "We can only understand any particular passage of the Bible if we know what the whole Bible teaches; but we can only know what the whole Bible teaches if we understand what its particular passages mean." That makes correct interpretation seem impossible, doesn't it? But the problem is not so great if we follow our third principle. (3) Interpret obscure passages *in the light of clear ones*. E.g., "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world" (James 1:27). That verse might possibly be used to teach salvation by works ("If you don't visit orphans and widows, you stand defiled and condemned before God"). But to teach thus is to contradict numerous very clear passages to the contrary: Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8,9; Tit. 3:5; etc. (4) Interpret according to *the original hearers' or readers' understanding*. E.g., Herbert Armstrong in his fantastic "British-Israel" doctrines, quoted Genesis 22:17, where God promises that Abraham's descendants will "possess the gate of their enemies." Armstrong explained,

A gate is a narrow passage of entrance or exit. When speaking nationally, a "gate" would be such a pass as the Panama Canal, the Suez, the Strait of Gibraltar . . . Britain and America came into possession of every such major "gate" in this world! So we MUST be modern Israel, the descendants of Abraham.

But that is nonsense. In ancient times a city's gates were used as places for holding court, reading the law and making proclamations. Thus in Scripture a city's gates sometimes represent the city itself (Ps. 87:2; Gen. 24:60), and to "possess the gate of your enemies" simply means to be victorious over your foes. This is how Abraham would interpret God's promise to him.

Other Principles

Now let's consider some other principles of interpretation. (5) *Interpret the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament*. This is especially true in the realm of ethics, and explains many Old Testament practices which to us today may seem harsh and cruel. Theologians call this the principle of "progressive revelation."

Revelation is not complete all at once. It grows clearer as the ages advance. God takes up man as He finds him, with his crude ideas and defective moral standards and social institutions (e.g., marriage, divorce, women's rights, slavery, etc.), and He makes the best of man that He can at the time.

For instance, the Mosaic law allowed slavery and did not clearly condemn polygamy, although it contained in itself principles which should have resulted in the abolition of both these practices (love your neighbor as yourself). When the Pharisees asked Jesus why God in the law allowed divorce if it were against God's will (as

Jesus had said), Christ replied that that law was given because of the people's hardness of heart and that it was contrary to God's plan in creation (Mark 10:2-6). Again, Jesus forbade His disciples to imitate the example of Elijah when he called fire down from heaven against his enemies. What was suitable to the age and circumstances of that prophet (for Christ did not condemn Elijah for what he did) might not be suitable for a later age with its greater revelation of God's truth (Luke 9:51-56).

All of this does not detract from the sufficiency of the Biblical record, taken as a whole. It detracts only from the sufficiency of certain parts of it IF taken by themselves. Two principles must be kept in balance: (1) the whole Bible is inspired; (2) some parts of it need to be illuminated by other parts.

--E. J. Carnell, *A Case for Orthodox Theology*

Sometimes white settlers in America, violating this principle, justified aggressive wars against the Native Americans by referring to Israel's wars against the Canaanites. Later, many slave owners justified slavery because Israelites and even Philemon were allowed to keep slaves. But that does not mean God considered slavery a good thing, which should be continued. "Progressive revelation" also explains why godly men in ancient times (e.g., Abraham, David) practiced polygamy, while elders in the churches must be husbands of one wife only.

(6) *Interpret according to the literary form of the passage.* This may sound technical and complicated, but actually it is not. The Bible contains various forms of literature, and they should not all be treated in the same way. We recognize this fact when reading other books; it applies to the Bible as well. We might say there are *various kinds of truth*. Or maybe it's clearer to say there are various ways (*genre*, they are called) of *presenting* truth. Let's think about them. (a) *Historical* truth consists of factual statements. So-and-so went to this place and did that deed and said such-and-such. The statement he said may have been false--an honest mistake or a deliberate lie (like Satan's "You shall not surely die"). Thus not all the statements in the Bible are true; Satan's wasn't! Another example of this fact:

In the first 37 chapters of Job, his comforters say a number of things in the heat of debate which are spoken in the book in order to be contradicted and not in order to be endorsed. It is only when God Himself appears in the last 5 chapters that the first 37 chapters take on meaning. (John Stott)

So, inspiration doesn't guarantee that the person quoted is infallible--it only guarantees that the writer recorded exactly what the person said. (b) *Poetical* truth is different from historical or scientific

description. In Psalm 29 David calls thunder "the voice of the Lord." But obviously he was writing poetically, not literally. So to accuse him of being naive or superstitious would be as silly as to accuse Carl Sandburg of thinking fog walks on four legs just because he wrote, "The fog comes on little cat feet . . ." (c) *Phenomenal* truth is not scientifically accurate, but describes events from the point of view of the observer. Scripture describes the universe in phenomenal language, so that all people of all ages can understand. We do the same thing every time we ask, "Did you see the *sunset* this evening?" Thus Joshua's telling the sun to stand still does not mean that the Bible teaches that the sun revolves around the earth. Joshua doubtless thought it did, but even if he didn't he still might well have used the same words--speaking phenomenally.

(d) *Symbolical* truth occurs often in Scripture. Sometimes its meaning is obvious: "Behold the Lamb of God"; "This is my body." Sometimes the Bible itself clearly interprets the symbols: "You are the head of gold," said Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar when explaining the dream about the great image. Other times the meaning is not clear, and Christians differ--as Brother Boll and Brother Chambers held different beliefs about the rider on the white horse in Rev. 6:2. (c) *Proverbial* truth sets forth moral lessons in broad, general statements. But such proverbs are not *always* true; there are many exceptions. E.g., note the following quotes from Scripture: "When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Prov. 16:7). "Pilate said, 'What shall I do with Jesus?' They all said, 'Let him be crucified.'" (Matt. 27:22). Contradiction? Yes, but it's nothing to worry about, because proverbs are merely wise observations which are *generally*--but not *always*--true.

(f) *Cultural* truth is at times a little complicated. "Its significance can't be known without an understanding of the cultural environment in which it was given," explains Peter Wagner. He then gives an example:

According to 1 Peter 3, women are not supposed to braid their hair. By this we certainly may understand that there was something wrong for first century Christian women to do it. But we needn't force 20th century women into the mold. That doesn't mean we can ignore the teaching, though. Peter was stating an eternal truth in culturally-bound language: Christian women should be inconspicuously modest. (*Eternity Magazine*, Nov., 1958.)

Should Christians today wash one another's feet, or is Christ's command (John 13:14) applicable only in a culture of sand and sandals? Should we greet one another with a holy kiss, as Paul commands in five different places? How and to what extent do Paul's teachings about the veiling of women (1 Cor. 11:2-6) and the silence of women (1 Cor. 14:34) apply to us now? Christians differ regard-

ing these and other matters. "Let every one be fully convinced in his own mind" (Romans 14:5b).

(g) *Doctrinal* truth refers to passages which set forth the teachings of the Christian faith, about God, man, sin, salvation, eternity, etc. E.g., Romans 3:20-4:25, 13:1-7, and 1 Cor. 15 give systematic explanations of justification by faith, the Christian view of government and the resurrection, respectively. In such passages we find God's truth presented in the clearest, most orderly manner. Therefore we should seek to base our "theology" mainly on doctrinal passages rather than on poetical, symbolical, proverbial or historical ones. (Pentecostals overlook this in their teaching about tongues as the necessary evidence of the baptism with the Holy Spirit, which they base on examples in the book of Acts. The epistles do not support their interpretation of Acts, however.) Of course, we do *not* mean we should ignore Acts, Psalms, Revelation, Proverbs, etc. and study only doctrinal passages such as the epistles. It is merely that in formulating doctrine we should *begin* with doctrinal passages, and give them the preference should there seem to be a contradiction between them and, say, a parable.

Wagner illustrates this principle for us:

One cult feels that clapping of hands and making loud noises are important parts of Christian worship services. In one of its publications a quote from Psalms supports each of the practices. "O clap your hands all ye people, shout unto God with the voice of triumph" (Psa. 47:1). The comment: "Some may say, 'Why should I do that?' If for no other reason than because God tells you to, that should be enough!" Or again, "O come . . . let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation" (Psa. 95:1). Comment: "Some may say they do not believe in making noise in church. In other words they disagree with God and what His word teaches. They don't believe in doing what God wants them to do! Evidently they are out of harmony with God . . ." One would think that if these physical manifestations were as important a part of Christian worship as the tract writer pretends, Paul would have mentioned them in 1 Cor. 14 or in the Pastoral Epistles.

Never go first to the non-theological portions of Scripture to form any Christian doctrine or practice, then try to make the theological portions fit in. That's allowing the tail to wag the dog.

May God help us to study His Word carefully and prayerfully. And obediently too.

THE LOGIC OF THE BIBLE

3rd Installment

Paul S. Knecht

SIN

In speaking of the righteousness of God we of necessity encounter the sin of man, a new entity requiring careful attention. From the early chapters of Genesis it seems clear enough that despite man's noble origin, his high calling and great potential for accomplishment, God deliberately left man dependent on his Creator for moral counsel. Satan, in time, suggested that God's motive for doing this was selfish. The fertile soil of mistrust was prepared for the deception that man through his knowledge could and should achieve independence from God. Adam's representative sin was mistrust of God's intentions. This suspicion replaced his former confidence in God. This confidence man now unsuspectingly places in his new found advisor, the devil himself! This characteristic behavior of man is the essence of sin and sinfulness.

However God continued to maintain a relationship with mankind of helping, instructing, pardoning, striving, until man's rejection of God was utter and seemingly irrevocable. The Noahic flood was an act of judgment against man, but despite man's rebellion Noah's appreciation of God's mercy to him elicited an unbelievable response of promise and blessing. God promised to never again curse the earth and to never again destroy life so completely, despite the rebelliousness of man! The era following the flood developed exactly like the era preceding it. Man refused to acknowledge God, thrusting Him out of human affairs until God gave man up. The vine of the earth was officially abandoned, as described in Romans 1:18-32, to vile passions, envy, murder, strife, etc. The main point here is that the acts we usually label sin are just its more obvious end products. Sin begins with and is comprehended in the suspicion that there are good things to be had outside of GOD. Paul sums it up succinctly in the statement in Romans 14:23, "whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

ABRAHAM THE "CALLED OUT"

The vine of the earth is abandoned, having gone wild but God salvages a cutting in the person of Abram and miraculously creates a new strain in Isaac, born to Abram and Sarai, when they are both nearly centenarians, because they believed the promise of God. Abram, later named Abraham, patriarch of Israel, Islam, and Christianity, begins an extensive new development in the Bible that is a major theme in its own right. Many details of Abraham's life are

recorded in the book of Genesis but their significance only becomes apparent from the meaning attached to them in the New Testament. Paul tells us in Romans 4 that Abraham was counted righteous (justified) because of his faith. His justification is the model of justification for all: he is the father of all believers both Jew and non-Jew, and he is heir to the world--the inhabited earth, man's dominion.

This theme is further pursued in Galatians 3 where Paul recognizes God's promise to Abraham ("In thee shall all of the families of the earth be blessed") as the very gospel, a proclamation of the final triumph of Christ. And he reminds us that the *promises of God* belong to Abraham and to His Seed (Christ), and that all who are Christ's are Abraham's children, being heirs of *Abraham's promise*--i.e., man's dominion, the earth. In other passages, Paul reminds Gentiles of their alien status as the vine of the earth--"separate from Christ...strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world."

He further describes Gentile believers as wild olive branches grafted into the root and fatness of Israel's olive tree (i.e., the source of Israel's blessing). In Hebrews 11:10 we learn that Abraham looked for the city whose builder and maker is God, that he died in faith not having received it--but that he shall yet receive it, for God has prepared it for him and his *Seed*. That city is surely the Father's house of many mansions that Jesus went to prepare. John saw it at last in Revelation coming down out of heaven from God, "made ready as a bride adorned for her husband." The place of Abraham in God's redemptive plan for the world can hardly be exaggerated: God showed him in his experience with Isaac the meaning of the new birth, and that the heir would have to die and be resurrected. God confided His own deep grief at Calvary to Abraham as He led him to lay Isaac on the altar of sacrifice, and He referred proudly ever after to Abraham as "My friend." (Isaiah 41:8)

Abraham met his own death confident of resurrection, for he had not yet received the promise but he had met the Christ so he knew he would. "Abraham rejoiced that he should see my day," Jesus said, "and he saw it, and was glad." (John 8:56)

Among the host of Abraham's descendants there were some who emulated his faith and his devotion to God thus becoming heirs with him of the same promise. To them from time to time God renewed the promise and filled in some of the details. To King David, for example, God promised that the Christ would be one of his descendants, that He would occupy David's throne, and that God would establish His kingdom forever. (II Samuel 7) It was further revealed that David's son, the Christ, was to be the son of God.

And so the expectation of the Christ and His kingdom grew. The prophets portrayed a world-ruling king on David's throne establishing a kingdom of justice and peace, of goodwill, reconciliation, of healing and joy, for all the families of the earth. And when the virgin was told that she was to bear the Son of God, she was also reminded that God would give Him the throne of *His Father David* forever, in a kingdom that would have no end. (Luke 1:32) Thus the promise to Abraham took on definition as God imparted specific details to the prophets.

The hope of Israel summed up in the concept of the first four New Testament books is that one Jesus of Nazareth is the long awaited Christ, the Son of God. John the Baptist, convinced of this, called for national repentance, preaching that the kingdom of God was at hand. (Mark 1:14-15) John's ministry was abruptly terminated and Jesus, taking up John's message, preached it throughout all the cities and villages of Israel. That message is called the gospel of God. It is the gospel that attracted both John's and Jesus' following and it is the gospel Jesus sent His disciples out to preach. Israel did not, as a nation, respond, failing somehow to see her own alienation from God, her lack of qualification for the kingdom of righteousness and justice the Christ was to establish. Jesus was rejected and crucified as foretold by the prophets and after three days was raised from death and spent nearly six weeks with his followers. He helped them to understand the atoning purpose of His death, prepared them for the prophesied coming of the Holy Spirit and instructed them to carry the gospel to "every creature," including the Gentiles. And He did not change the gospel (as some suppose) for there *is but one*.

So the apostles, empowered by the Holy Spirit, preached the gospel of the kingdom of God, proving from the prophecies that Jesus is the Christ, and declaring that, though murdered, He is alive and will come again "at the times of restoration of all things." Repentance was called for, and remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit promised. Those who believed the gospel, were "called out" by it, called out of the age of rebellion "to serve a living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven."

This "called-out body" (Greek-"ekklesia") of which Abraham is the father (Romans 4:11-16) and archetype is known in the New Testament as the "church." Use of the word "church" to translate "ekklesia" is unfortunate in that it obscures rather than illuminates, but the proper translation may be readily discovered in any Greek Lexicon and the nature of the "ekklesia" can be clearly established from the scriptures. It is referred to in the New Testament as "the house of God," built up of living stones, and God has but one such

house. In Hebrews 3 we read that Moses was faithful *in* it, Christ is faithful *over* it, and we are part *of* it.

The argument that the church could not have existed before Jesus came because He said, "I *will* build My church," is inadequate. Just prior to Jesus' making that statement, Peter had declared his conviction that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus referred to this great truth as the rock upon which His called-out body of believers, the church, was to be built. If we bear in mind that for centuries before Jesus' coming there were believers like Abraham, called out by the gospel and justified by faith, and that prior to the shedding of Christ's blood there was *in reality* no basis for forgiveness of sins, then Jesus' statement becomes intensely meaningful. With the Lamb of God then present and ready to lay down His life for the sins of the world, the atonement symbolized in the Old Testament was about to become a reality, an historical event upon which could rest at last the faith of all those living stones of old. They trusted God to be able to resolve the sin problem and fulfill His promises to them. (Psalms 32,51; Job 14:16-17; 19:25)

It is this assembly of believers to which we have now been added, being built on the same foundation, God having abolished the barrier that once officially shut out the Gentiles. This house of God, this ekklesia, this church, is called an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, "the Israel of God." (1 Peter 2:9) This group truly performed the spiritual functions for which the nation of Israel was called. And what of the nation of Israel? To this theme we must now turn.

[To be continued. The author welcomes feedback: 8013 Circle Dr., Georgetown, IN 47122.]

"The GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST" (Mark 1:1)

God's good news is called "the gospel of GRACE of GOD" (Acts 20:24) because God's gracious nature is the source from which our salvation flows.

Paul also calls it "the MESSAGE OF THE CROSS" and says, "We preach Christ crucified" (1 Cor. 1:18,23) because His death is the basis of our salvation.

Scripture more often refers to the "GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM." Jesus, Philip, and Paul all preached it, and we too should preach it! (Matt. 13:18-19; 24:14) This is not a different gospel, but a different aspect of the one-&-only gospel (Gal. 1:6-8). God's kingdom is the goal of salvation. It is His kingly authority, His rule. Those who submit to His rule now (thus entering His kingdom, Col. 1:13) will share in His rule later, at His return: 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 3:21, etc. --Alex V. Wilson

Are our churches filled with sodomites? Note Ezekiel's words.

AT EASE IN ZION?

"Now this was the sin of . . . Sodom: She [was] arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; [she] did not help the poor and needy." (Ezek. 16:49)

SELFISHNESS and hoarding--of either spiritual or material resources--is so against the nature of God that He has always harshly judged those who refuse to share their wealth with the needy.

The other morning I picked up a popular Christian magazine and looked through it. There were interesting articles, stories and reports from all over the world, some written by famous Christian leaders.

Then I began to notice what this one magazine offered me as a Christian. There were ads for 21 Christian colleges, seminaries and correspondence courses, 5 translations of the Bible, 7 conferences and retreats, 5 new films, 19 commentaries and devotional books, 7 "Christian" health, diet and exercise programs and 5 fund-raising services for churches.

There were also services for writing, editing and graphics, counseling and chaplaincy services, and numerous helps for churches to find a pastor. There were ads for positions, church steeples, choir robes, wall crosses, baptisteries and baptistery heaters, "prophetic" T-shirts, records and tapes, adoption agencies, tracts, poems, gifts, Christian clubs and Christian penpals.

It was all very impressive. Then it began to bother me, because I remembered that there are 2.7 billion people in the world who have never heard of Jesus Christ. And I knew that there are 16,000 cultural groups with not one church, and 5,000 languages without any Scripture. And I know that 40,000 people die every day without Christ in my native India.

In America, we spend 94 percent of the world's Christian finances to minister to 6 percent of the world's people.

I believe that right now, the heart of God is aching over the lost millions around the world, and over us, living in spiritual luxury, blind to what He is calling us to do.

Prayer Request: *Pray that more of the resources we spend for our comfort will be used to take the Gospel to those who have never heard.*

VOICES from the FIELDS

Robert and Joy Garrett Zimbabwe January 27, 1995

We had a good start to the New Year with a full building here at Rockwood Park. There were over 500 for our annual Harvest Day. The collection was our highest yet-over \$15,000 (Zimbabwe currency).

After a lunch cooked by our newly married men, the young people had their quiz finals on Daniel. Four youth are selected from each congregation in Havare and they compete on a Saturday in December to be in the final competition on New Year's Day. The top four congregations did very well on the tough questions set by Brother Patrick Muchaya. Hatfield won by one question and received the winner's plaque.

Because the Mazda's (4 ton truck used to transport people to meetings) starter, which we'd purchased just 3 months ago, was stolen, we had to make another trip to South Africa for a new one. They are not available here. Bob plans to weld a cage around the new one.

Mark Garrett Senegal, Africa January 16, 1995

No matter where you live in the world, following Jesus will cost you something. Here in Senegal, believers face intimidation and opposition from their family and friends. One of the believers here comes late to services almost every Sunday. Why? Because his mother gives him lots of work to do on Sundays to discourage him from coming. I call it the Cinderella syndrome. But she quickly does what is required and comes anyway. Another believer is getting pressure from his father. Will he be kicked out of the house?

His classes canceled, a Muslim high school student came to our reading room one morning. He wanted to know if we were promoting Christianity. I evaded his question and maintained that I was a disciple of Jesus. Was I Catholic? No. Had I heard of Protestants? Yes I had. But could he explain the difference to me? He thought Protestants didn't believe in Mary or the virgin birth of Christ and it was on this point that they separated from the Catholics. So I showed her from Luke's gospel that the Bible teaches clearly that Jesus was virgin born. The Bible is our authority, I explained, not the traditions or thought of men. This led us into a great discussion about why God left us His Word and why He chose to speak in the languages of men. I still haven't answered the student's question about whether I'm a

Protestant or not, but that's probably best. His definition of a Protestant needs a little fleshing out. I don't want to guess at how he defines Evangelicals!

Our Senegal experience is often the familiar with an unexpected twist. Take a regular American hamburger, tuck into the bun a fried egg and a handful of fries, and you have the famous Senegalese "Complete Hamburger." It sounds strange, but we've grown to like it.

The Nakaharas Shizuoka City, Japan Jan. 1995

For the Nakaharas, life this year is much different from what it was last year, for we were blessed with a son. Kazuma. We have had a lot of new experiences. He was born on October 5, 1994. Now he can see clearly and talks a lot. No one understands him, however. He is very healthy and well-developed, for which we are very thankful. We realize a heavy responsibility as parents. We hope to set a good example to him as Christian parents under God's guidance--especially when I recall the teachings that I received from my parents, Shichiro and Teruko.

The number of our Sunday School students are decreasing some this year, but one couple has already two young ones and with their assistance we hope to have friendly relationship among some mothers in the neighborhood. Sunday School takes us for a while to recover, but we begin to discuss about the matter, because we are concerned for our own infant's spiritual growth as he matures.

We experienced a very special Christmas season this year with our mother, for she came to visit us awhile. Grandmother needed to see Kazuma. We must experience sorrow of separation in February as she returns to the United States. If the Lord wills, we may make a visit and have a happy reunion with you sometime this summer.

Teruko Nakahara writes: It is a great blessing to see the work here in Shizuoka has been in a healthy condition spiritually. Although I don't see much growth in number, I do see much growth in love, spirit and unity among the brethren. As it may be the same as some churches in the United States, the majority of the members here are aged and not many young people and a few young children. It hurts me to see this because this congregation started with Sunday School with so many children and young people. Of course, I see the change in three decades and the church couldn't escape from the worldly influences. My fervent prayers for Sunday School overflows and I am appreciative of you if you pray on this matter with me.

YOUTH RALLY HUGE SUCCESS

Douglas Broyles

Jennings Church of Christ, January 30, 1995

We feel as though we have been on a high, and it has nothing to do with drugs! Instead, it has to do with 189 wonderful young people who spent the weekend studying in classes and having a good time together at our church's Youth Rally. The Sunday morning attendance reached 259 and the singing was beautiful!

A Youth Rally is bringing together of young people for a common purpose or action. Our congregation has been sponsoring them for seven years now, and they keep getting better!

This year's speaker was Sonny Childs of Olney, Ill., young, dynamic, and filled with moving stories that kept the young people's attention. Of course, you have to know that these young people are special. They have to be, to give us a Saturday to "go to Church"! Not one negative incident occurred during the rally, which also says a lot for these kids.

The theme of the rally this year was "Teenager can be soul Winner!" and the teenagers learned early that they are not the "church of tomorrow," but instead, they are the church of today and can be very useful in it. They were then taught how to go about doing such work for the church now.

After a good lunch, the young people had time to skate together and then play tennis, volleyball, and basketball. Some of them just sat on cars, benches, or swings in the lovely sunshine and 68 degree weather and got to know each other better. They came from churches in Amite, Denham Springs, Baton Rouge, Mandeville, Pine Prairie, Turkey Creek, Crowley, Lake Charles, and many cities in between.

Besides young people, some parents accompanied the students. Between classes and during the breaks, many of them could be seen counseling students or confiding with the guest speaker. Some parents were weeping, obviously distressed about their children.

The rally renewed a sense of responsibility in us and seemed to awaken a sense of urgency in the young people. They learned the Mission is to act natural or be themselves, find someone who had a need, and then know the Word that would help that someone. The

Message is called the "Roman Road," including passages from Romans 3:23; 6:23; 5:8; 10:9-10; 2:4; and 6:3-4. The Method is to use positive peer pressure to its greatest advantage; be radical trendsetters!

Many young people responded with remarks like "I had such a great time!" and "It was more fun than I thought it would be." The purpose of setting aside a time from the normal flow of things to work on relationships seemed to be fulfilled as young people spoke seriously about what they would do when they returned home. Lecky Gough, from Pine Prairie, who has attended all seven rallies, insisted that this was the best one yet.

One amusing incident included taking the "Yankee" speaker to lunch and introducing her to boudin, fried crawfish, and Cajun fried chicken. After insisting he liked it, once he got used to the spices, he then had to listen to Douglas tell her what parts of the pig went into the boudin! He was a brave soul, just turning a little bit pale.

There was a time, after the first few rallies, when we were not yet professionals at it, that we would wring our hands afterwards and say, "That's it. We're not doing another one!" After a weekend like the one we have just completed, however, Douglas and I both agree that our young people are worth it! Rallies such as these will help them develop and work out their own personal witness program.

We highly recommend that any church contact Sonny Childs in Illinois for a youth rally, family values workshop, or gospel meeting. The Lord is using her in a mighty way.

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Jack Blaes

Letter From A Veteran Laborer

My wife Esther is in a nursing home. I live about 3 blocks away. I walk up to see him most every day. I attend church with the Brocks (my daughter & him family) where I teach some; keep in touch with others by phone & letter, and write some articles for The Reminder. My health has improved some in spite of my Parkinson's Disease, thank God. Reading has become more difficult for me due to loss

of vision. But I can still pray and write on my computer.

We still have about 30,000 tracts printed and paid for in DeRidder awaiting distribution. If any of you would like to help distribute them, please let us know. I will be 87 on March 15; Esther will be 93 April 14; we will celebrate our 66th anniversary May 25 if the Lord wills. Please pray that God may use me for His glory the rest of my life. --Miller Forcade, c/o Tom Brock, Rt. 5, Box 495-D, Gatesville TX 76528.

Sad News: Please Take Note

In our Jan. W&W we advertised the hymnal GREAT SONGS OF THE CHURCH @ \$5.95. We did not know the publisher had raised the price by \$2.00! Printing costs have increased a lot recently, and higher prices are inevitable. So please take note that GREAT SONGS now costs \$7.95 each plus postage (and also tax in Ky.). If bought in lots of 150 or more copies the cost goes down to \$7.75 plus postage. This is the longtime popular version with 670 songs, not the greatly revised edition.

Postage Costs More Too

We make W&W available as economically as possible. Where else do you get 11 issues yearly for only \$6.00? Please help us by notifying us promptly of changes of address. Every time a magazine is returned to us due to faulty address it costs us almost the price of a whole magazine.

Russian Mayor To Visit Here

Through Earl Mullins' ministry in Russia, the Mayor of Kineshma, a city of 108,000 northeast of Moscow, plans to visit Louisville in May. Kineshma's superintendent of education is extremely interested in the Bible and promotes teaching of Christian beliefs & morals in its schools. She is spearheading the mayor's visit to Christian schools here, hoping to strengthen ties between his city & believers in this area. For more information, contact Earl Mullins, P.O. Box 1509, New Albany IN 47151; (812) 945-6140.

Gallatin Church of Christ

God has appointed the man to be the head of his family. And with the position comes awesome responsibility. That leadership carries over into the church as well. And in families and churches where the men do not fulfill their God-given role, failure and frustration usually abound.

Knowing this to be true, we are beginning an effort to rally the men of this congregation to be better prepared and committed to doing what they have been appointed by God to do.

To learn more about this effort, all our men are invited to the first of several meetings. A Chinese proverb says, "It is harder to lead a family than to rule a nation." Join us as we learn how to better lead our homes and church!

Maple Manor Children's Home

"Hi my name is Stephanie. I've lived at Maple Manor for 6 months. I am leaving for Pekin, Indiana to go and live with a foster family.

Being at Maple Manor I've learned a lot about forgiving others, respecting others and the ability to raise my grades in school.

I appreciate all the house-parents that have helped me learn all these things." --Stephanie

Being Stephanie's house-parent has been such a blessing to me. Seeing him grow in Christ and maturing into a young lady has been a rewarding part of this ministry. The desire to know more about Christ has challenged me with my own walk.

This ministry isn't only about teaching and instructing children it also learning and growing yourself.

Philippians 1:6 "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." --Karen, Maple Manor House-parent

The above if from Horizon, a publication of the Maple Manor Home. If you are not receiving the paper, the next time you send your "support" request to be put on their mailing list. -- J.B.

Church of Christ World Wide

Church of Christ World Wide is a mission project of the Cramer & Hanover Church of Christ. This is not a "Missionary Society" or "Mission Board". It recognizes the autonomy of local congregations. Among its goals is to encourage congregations to sponsor or participate in support of missions.

In recent years there has been a revived interest and concern among

young people to serve the Lord in cross cultural ministry. These people need our encouragement! If not continually challenged and guided, they will either go elsewhere to find that support, or may become distracted by the cares of this world and lose the vision.

We are here to promote world missions awareness and action at churches, schools, conference, retreats, camps, etc. This may be done via seminars, workshops, preaching or other means. Such meetings could provide:

Information (such as "Overview of World Missions" or "Up-date on Missions".)

Doctrine (such as "Biblical Basis of World Missions".)

Practical (counseling and working with prospective missionaries, helping missionaries on the field in various ways.)

We assist as forwarding agent of funds to missionaries and mission projects around the world. During 1994, this office received a total of \$120,431.31 gross from all sources.

Restoration Forum XIII

The Restoration Forum XIII will be held in Louisville on Nov. 8-10. Most sessions will be held at the Galt House downtown. After the closing session in Louisville, those who wish will travel to Cane Ridge (near Paris, Ky)—site of the great revival in which Barton Stone was a leader. Restoration Forums are gatherings of folks from Churches of Christ, Christian Churches, and Disciples of Christ—to worship our living Lord, study His Word, discuss what unites & divides us, promote fellowship and challenge each other to love & good works. Nathan Burks, Julius Hovan, Henry Ott and I attended the Forums at Cincinnati or Akron or both, & found them to be rich

experiences. Save Nov. 8-10. More details later.

3 Yateses Hope To Go To Africa

Dawn Yates gave birth to a daughter in February. Tim and they hope to leave to do mission work in Malawi by May. They still lack full support for this. You may call them at 615: 573-4537 or write to their treasurer: P.O. Box 4186, South Daytona, FL 32121. Tim was unexpectedly given the chance to visit Malawi back in Dec. on a relief mission. Severe drought and famine were widespread in that part of Africa. He was enabled to help distribute food to over 7,700 people there in the name of Jesus Christ.

Ken Rideout In U.S. For Furlough

Veteran missionary Ken Rideout plans to be in the U.S. in March and following. The Gallatin Church co-sponsors him. He and his recently deceased wife have ministered in various lands of Asia—mainly Singapore and Thailand—for decades. If you have a chance, be sure to hear him. While we were in Manila we had some wonderful visits with them!—Alex Wilson

Honor To Whom Honor Is Due

Children's Church Thriving! Katherine Rutledge is doing a great job working with the children each Sunday, along with some helpers. Last Sunday 26 children enjoyed the lesson with her. Each Sunday morning following communion, those in 1st grade and below are invited to participate. On Sunday evenings, the 5th graders and below join her. We thank Miss Kat for this good work she is doing.

—Jennings, La. Church of Christ

CALLING ALL LADIES

This is your invitation to the 1995 Ladies Inspiration Day being held on April 22. The host church will be Belmont Church of Christ, located at 40 Belmont Avenue in Winchester, KY. Registration will begin at 8:30 a.m. and the day will end around 3:00 p.m. The theme will be

"THAT YOUR JOY MAY BE COMPLETE".

Our program will feature **Jodell Seay** as the main speaker, inspirational singing from the ladies of Southeast Church of Christ and several workshops.

Please plan now to attend! For more information contact Sherry Marsh at (606) 744-3021

REPORT ON THE JAPAN EARTHQUAKE FROM BROTHER MOTO NOMURA, FEB. 8

Two Christian men went to the earthquake stricken Osaka-Kobe area to see what and how we can help. There are lots of things to do, but no one really knows just how and where to begin. A church in Tokyo is thinking of a cook-out project for homeless people living in public parks. My wife and I expressed willingness to accept 1-2 primary school children, but we discovered the human disaster of bureaucracy is worse than the natural disaster. Japan boasts of her technology, but the earthquake has taught her people a humiliating lesson--which people refuse to accept, sad to say.

We need to present Christ more than ever before, and we need younger workers urgently. Where are they?

[Later he himself visited the area. Thousands of displaced people will be living in parks for months to come.]