

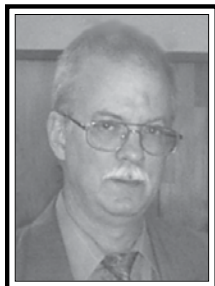
# The Berea Baptist Banner

"Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth" Ps. 60:4

## Does II Thessalonians Chapter Two Teach A Post Tribulation Rapture?

By Lucien J. LeSage Jr.  
of Pride, Louisiana

I have listened to more than one exposition of this chapter being used in an effort to prove a post tribulation rapture. But does it really? When we examine this chapter in the context of I Thessalonians, and the previous chapter along with other Scriptures, I think it proves just the opposite. While the word



"rapture" is not in the Bible the event which is called the Rapture is most definitely found in the New Testament writings of the Apostle Paul and I believe mentioned by the Lord Jesus Christ as well. The word rapture

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## Are We Godly Encouragements?

By Joseph M. Sidders  
of Guntown, Mississippi

For the purposes of this topic, let us consider Christ's own words in Matthew 6:33, **"...seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness..."** I do not typically prefer to use mere portions of verses as my text; however, I want to use this verse to expound what Haggai writes in the Old Testament.

It was the fall of BC 520, that Haggai delivered this message.



Sixteen years had passed since the laying of the foundation, and the temple lay unfinished. This message was delivered to the two leaders of the nation, Zerubbabel and Joshua, the civil ruler and the religious leader. Haggai does not waste any time in his first message (Haggai 1) as he gets right to the

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## If the Rapture Happened Today

By Matthew Stepp  
of Wayne, West Virginia

Being a Baptist preacher that takes Scripture literally, I am expecting the Rapture to occur any day now. Today, even! **"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus"** (Rev. 22:20). I am with you, Brother John. A couple of millennia later, but 2021 would be fine with me. **"...Even so, come, Lord Jesus."** Selah! Think about it!

I would like to impress upon our consciousness what that



imminent return will mean for this ole world. If the Rapture happened today, what ramifications would it have

on this world? And looking into the future through the Scriptural prophesies that we have, what will happen next? Well, for us Christians, **"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them"** (our dearly departed) **in the clouds, to**

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## The Joy of the Lord Brings Strength

By Paul Stepp  
of Indore, West Virginia

In the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, when the Children of Israel began to return into the land of Israel from the places of their captivity, we find that they were subject to many difficulties, and many persecutions. And yet, despite all of the problems and challenges they had to face and overcome, many of them recognized they were a blessed and honored generation of their people, in that they were given the privilege of bringing the people of God, the ways of God, and the worship of God back into Jerusalem and the surrounding



areas. As they worked and labored to re-build the temple; and as they struggled to restore the city and repair

the walls of Jerusalem; as they were ridiculed, opposed, and even persecuted in so many ways, still, they knew they were blessed of God. They knew they were on a mission from God, and that they could not be defeated, nor could God's will and purposes be denied.

**"And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before**

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## June 5, 2021 Volume XXXXI, Number 6

Whole Number 493

Editor: Christopher Cockrell

Staff: Sheron Cockrell, Marsha Kiser, Virginia Cockrell  
THE BEREBA BAPTIST BANNER (UPS 546470) is published monthly for \$6.00 per year by the authority of the Berea Baptist Church, 3881 Highway 363, Mantachie, Mississippi 38855. Periodical Publication postage paid at Mantachie, Mississippi.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE BEREBA BAPTIST BANNER, P. O. Box 39, Mantachie, Mississippi 38855-0039.

LOCATION OF PUBLISHING CHURCH: Our church is located on state highway 363 about one mile south of Mantachie, Mississippi. Readers are always welcome to visit our services.

CHURCH PHONE: 1-662-282-7794.

PUBLICATION POLICIES: All matter for publication should be sent to the editor. All manuscripts are to be typed and double spaced. All such material becomes the property of BBB and will not be returned unless requested by the writer. We reserve the right to edit and condense all materials sent to us for publication.

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PUBLISHED MONTHLY with paid circulation in most states in the U.S.A. and some foreign countries.

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One year.....\$6.00  
Two years.....\$10.00  
Five years.....\$24.00

SUBSCRIPTION RATES - FOREIGN One Year \$45

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1. To honor God and to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. To preach the gospel to lost sinners.
3. To spread the whole counsel of God's Word.
4. To encourage God's preachers and to strengthen His churches in the most holy faith.
5. To motivate God's children to a closer fellowship around His Word.
6. To inform people of world events in light of Bible prophecy.
7. To condemn and expose error wherever it may rear its ugly head.
8. To stimulate Christian growth in grace.
9. To make the Devil and his demons as mad as possible.

## Encouragements

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point of: "The people are making excuses and neglecting God's house. But it is time to get to work and finish the house of God." He points out their selfishness: they had built their own houses, but they said by their actions that it was not time to build God's house. In other words, they were putting self ahead of the Lord. Some of the Jews even had ceiled or sided houses, which would be luxuries in that day.

Read Haggai 1

### WHY IS THIS A SIN?

This sin of putting our own desires ahead of the will of the Lord is still among us today. How easy it is to make excuses for not doing God's work! The weather is too bad to go visiting or to attend church, but not too bad for a hunting trip or a shopping spree. People will sit through extra innings at a baseball game and never complain, maybe even claim it to be a bargain, yet they start to fidget if a church service runs five minutes overtime.

I think of what Moses said to Hobab back in Numbers 10:29, "We are journeying unto the place of which the LORD said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good..." This was concerning the promises the Lord had spoken of concerning Israel, but what of us elect Gentiles today? Do we not also have promises given unto us from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself? My favorite verse in the Bible is John 16:33, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Do you see the promise we have in the Lord here? Do we then honor

Him with our actions by putting Him first in our lives? Are we an encouragement to others... "Come and be with us, we will do you good for God has promised His blessings to those who would be made to repent and follow after Him ...and I am one of them!"

### WHAT WAS THE WARNING?

"Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways" (Haggai 1:7). He warns here that we really lose out when we put ourselves ahead of God. In 1:6 he tells us that our earnings vanish away and our possessions fail to last when God is left out. God held back the rain (vs. 10), and for this reason the crops failed (vs. 11). The Jews knew God's promise that He would bless their land if they honored Him, but they did not trust His Word, so they lost the blessing. Matthew 6:33 (our opening) is a great promise to claim beloved: "...seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Haggai's message was received with real conviction, and the leaders became stirred to do God's will. "Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the LORD. Then spake Haggai the LORD's messenger in the LORD's message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the LORD. And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of

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# Brief Truths

By Randy Johnson of  
Texarkana, Texas

"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation" (Ephesians 1:13).



## TRUE WORSHIP IS SPIRITUAL

**"But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth"** (John 4:23-24).

It is good for all Christians to understand how to worship God. So much worship today is false and for show. One absolute truth is that non-believers will never worship God because God is worshiped through our spirit and not outwardly, lost people have dead spirits. Lost people only have an outward form of worship because their dead spirit is dead. Now please understand, I did not say believers have no outwardly worship at all, God's people most certainly in their worship of God should show outward emotions. However, that outward emotion will be an outward passionate response of joy in our inward spirit or spiritual heart.

Personally, I think churches lack in outward responses to the inward spirit in today's times. Today we look at it as Pentecostalism to show much of an outward response. We have allowed the heathen to control our worship service and our external spiritual response. How can a happy and excited inward spirit be so contained without an outward response? Paul wrote in Romans 8:14-15, **"For as many**

**as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."** The word "cry" means to "croak" (as a raven) or scream, that is, (generally) to "call aloud." My word, you have been saved by God through the working of the Holy Spirit, scream it to the world in praise to God! Our outward emotion is our showing what the Holy Spirit is doing inwardly.

Robert Hawker said "The leadings of the Spirit, and the witnessings of the Spirit, all manifest in their daily tokens of grace, the sonship and privileges of the regenerate in Christ. It is they, and they only, which have freeness of access to the throne, and to the pardon-office of Christ; and can, and do say, Abba, Father! No servants, no bonds-men, no unregenerate; none but of the family of God in Christ, who are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; can so approach, or claim such a relationship. A union with Christ is the only foundation for enjoying communion with the heirship of Christ."

How can this salvation not be exciting, how can the proclaiming of the Word of God in truth not be exciting? As Christians, we have reason to cry out aloud and praise the Lord. Paul also wrote these words, **"And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father"** (Gal. 4:6). Men,

lift-up your voices to God in song, worship and prayer. Folks, let us lift the roof in praise to God for His grace in salvation, let our **"hearts, crying, Abba, Father!"**

Where the truth of God is preached there should be much rejoicing among the saints of God, AMEN! We cannot allow the heretics of false outward worship control our inward true worship of God and Jesus Christ as Saviour.

(Randy Johnson is pastor of the Sovereign Grace Missionary Baptist Church of Texarkana, Texas.)



## Encouragements

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**all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God, In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king"** (Haggai 1:12-15).

**"I am with you,"** promised the Lord. **"I will be glorified."**

Read Haggai 2

### WHAT IS THIS NEXT SIN?

In chapter two, just a few weeks later, we see a second sin of looking back. It was the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:34). It was supposed to be a great day of joy and praise, but instead it was a day of discouragement and complaining. Why are they so discouraged?

The people were looking back instead of looking ahead. When they had laid the foundation sixteen years before, the older men had wept because they remembered the glory of Solomon's temple and now some of the people were discouraged because the new temple lacked splendor and glory. Might we do that today? Many here in Mantachie remember firsthand

the giant conferences of Ashland Kentucky and the times when young, newer, preachers would not make it to the pulpit of such meetings because there were so many men studying and laboring in the work. Looking back now we might say "Less members, less preachers and so on..." In God's work, we must look ahead in faith. "Be strong and fear not!" God said to the discouraged leaders. "I am going to shake this world and one day establish my kingdom." God promises that the glory of the latter house will far exceed the glory of the former house. "And there I will give peace." This is a promise revisited in Hebrews 12:26-29, **"..Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire."** For the believer, dear reader, the best is yet to come.

### WHAT WAS THE COMMISSION?

Note, in our text, that the whole enterprise was a spiritual venture and not merely a work of the flesh. God's people rose up and put the Lord first in their lives! They sought after Him and desired to be in His presence!

This same commission was given to us, to make Him the priority of our lives and the subject of our every meditation. Oh, that we too would be turned out by the world and persecuted by the lost masses; that they would say of us, **"These that have turned**

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# Encouragements

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**the world upside down are come hither also**" (Acts 17:6). Reader, you might be thinking, "Oh, preacher, you ought not pray like that!" Why not, is it not the desire of my Lord? How can I be a Christian encouragement any other way than to preach the Gospel and turn this dying world upside down in the process? **"Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing? Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts: According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not. For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts"** (Haggai 2:3-9).

**"I will shake all nations...saith the Lord"** (Haggai 2:7). We have a commission to preach everywhere. Everywhere! Are we held back by unbelief? Circumstances have a way of discouraging or distracting us as we seek the work of the Lord. As we seek to be Christian

encouragements let us first pray for one another. Pray for me that I would be the pastor you need me to be by God's will. Pray for our teacher, that he would be encouraged and that other men would succumb to the Lord's will for them to teach here for us and lead in their homes as they should. Pray for the musicians and kid's Sunday school teachers.

Satan spends a lot of time convincing us that we are not good enough, that compared to others we have nothing that we could offer. He is right, **"Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up"** (James 4:5-10).

There is not a saved man reading this article that cannot teach me something if he would give time over to studying God's Word. In doing so I would not feel shown up or embarrassed, it would be an encouragement to me! To you and your families! Oh think of the angels that Paul says are in attendance to our worship services and think of them bearing witness to feeble men like me, standing and giving praises to God!

**"And again the word of the LORD came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying, Speak**

**to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts"** (Haggai 2:20-23).

These final four verses give proof to the power of Godly encouragement. What encouragement Haggai was to the governor of Judah, Zerubbabel. No doubt Zerubbabel needed special encouragement as he directed the work of the Lord; reigniting cold furnaces always takes some work. Perhaps Zerubbabel saw the great empires around him and feared for the future of the tiny remnant of Jews. But God encouraged the governor's faith. He tells us through this account not to fear these kingdoms that seek to oppress us. Their torment of us ends here! **"I will shake the heavens and the earth,"** God said. Look how the text drills down. This is not a mere earthquake, but a targeted offensive movement!

Zerubbabel was an ancestor of Jesus Christ; his name is listed in the genealogies (Matthew 1:12 and Luke 3:27). Here Christ is seen as God's chosen signet, His precious seal. A signet speaks of authority and honor. God gave Zerubbabel authority to finish the temple; God gave His Son authority to save the lost and build His church.

What work is it God has called

you to do before Christ returns? Have you started it but not finished it? Are you discouraged? Beware of these hindrances and notice the wonderful power of Godly encouragement: **"I am with you"** (1:13); **"Fear ye not"** (2:5); **"I will bless you"** (2:19); **"I have chosen you"** (2:23). Let us provoke one another in love with these words and do the will of God!



## II Thessalonians

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is from the Latin word "rapturo." The Greek word from which this is derived is "harpazo" which will be discussed in this article. Paul called this event a "mystery" that he revealed in his epistle to the church of God which was at Corinth (see I Cor. 15:51).

**"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"** (II Thess. 2:1-4).

### TWO THINGS MENTIONED

There are two things mentioned in the first two verses. The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him. And the second thing mentioned is the **"day of Christ."** Jesus Christ

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## Narrow Paths

By Doug Newell IV of  
Clendenin, West Virginia

"Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:14).

### BARE NECESSITIES

**"Distributing to the necessity of saints..."** (Rom. 12:13). Thoreau wrote the necessities of life in Walden were, "food, shelter, clothing, and fuel." It appears much has changed about humans since the 1800's since according to some, the basic necessities of life include free college, free health care, and high-speed internet access. If high-speed internet were a necessity to life, we would be in bad shape in Clay County. Other markers of basic necessities include well being, i.e., the place you live is getting better, or a safe and easy place to exercise. I certainly am not downplaying poverty, nor begrudge anyone for working to have any of these things. In my adult life, I have gone without and did not care for it, and did my best to get out of the situation. When you start putting comforts equal to needs, you will soon have (or already have) a covetous and unthankful heart.

Paul puts down the basic necessities of life in I Timothy 6:6-10 as food and raiment. The Bible does not say we can not have comforts or enjoy what He gives us. But the more you think you are owed something, the more unthankful and indignant you are when you do not have it. If we have food and clothing, then we should be content. That is what we need and anything else is gravy on top. Godliness with contentment is great gain and money and possessions are not a danger just for the wealthy. It is not just those who have money but those who love it

who are in peril. I have known a lot of poor people who loved money and coveted after it and wealthy people who had a lot because they loved money and went and got it.

The text speaks of the saints in need, so being without does not automatically mean you are a bad person or bad with your finances. Some kids are born behind the eight ball and are in bad shape before they can even make their own bad decisions. Providence sometimes leaves us empty handed and needy. Many saints have lost it all, ask Job. The "prosperity gospel" is a lie. Saints can have needs. Material prosperity is not a sign of God's love any more than not having anything is a sign of God's displeasure. Better to have bare necessities and be a saint than have it all and go to Hell. Being poor does not make you bad but it also does not make you good. Suffering now does not save you.

The church is charged in Romans to take care of those lacking the necessities in the household of faith. If a man would not work when he can, having needs are a great motivator. This text does not mean the church is responsible to make sure everyone has all they want and live equally with everyone else. It does mean though, if a brother is starving to death, you ought to put him on the prayer list only after you have fed him and gotten him some groceries.

(Doug Newell IV is pastor of the Buffalo Valley Baptist Church of Clay, West Virginia.)



## II Thessalonians

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is the Lord and so this day of Christ is termed the **"day of the Lord"** in the Old Testament. The Greek is "Christos" which means "anointed" and was translated "Christ" in the KJV. It was translated "day of the Lord" in a few other versions. Perhaps it should be pointed out that **"...the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son"** (John 5:22). Then we read in the Book of Revelation of **"...the wrath of the Lamb"** (Rev. 6:16). So the **"day of Christ"** is synonymous with the **"day of the Lord"** spoken of in the Old Testament.

Of these two things mentioned I might ask which is mentioned first? And is the **"day of the Lord"** a moment in time, or a time period of more than 24 hours? Is the **"our gathering together unto him"** synonymous with the **"day of the Lord?"** Do they happen at the same moment in time? I think these are questions that need to be answered in the context of other Scripture.

First we see the **"our gathering together unto him,"** which is what is commonly referred to as the Rapture, is mentioned first and this makes perfect sense when we examine other Scripture. Paul mentions the Rapture in I Thessalonians 4:14-18. There Paul tells us that the dead in Christ will be raised first. And then he uses the word **"we"** not **"them,"** speaking of those who are alive and are saved, being **"caught up"** together with the dead in Christ that are raised. They are caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. The words **"caught up"** are from one Greek word "harpazo" and it means "to seize, carry off by force," "to

snatch out or away." Remember Jesus told His early church, **"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). Paul tells the Thessalonians that these are comforting words concerning the Rapture. In I Corinthians chapter 15 verse 52 we see that this event happens in a moment of time. The Greek word is "atomos" and **"twinkling"** is a stroke of time. It is the smallest amount of time that cannot be divided and fits well with science discovering that time is quantized. Brother Milburn Cockrell writes concerning this event, "These saints shall meet Christ in the air; they shall be caught up to meet the Saviour in the clouds. There is no mention of any sign which will announce this coming, nor are the nations on earth said to see Christ... There is nothing which indicates that Christ and these come immediately back to earth. In the light of John 14:3, I must conclude that they go to the Father's house where they are seen in Revelation chapters 4-5. Why would Christ take them up into the clouds and then bring them right back? This makes no sense at all to this writer."

In chapter one of I Thessalonians Paul tells the Thessalonians **"...to wait for his Son from heaven..."** (vs. 10). How could Paul tell them to be waiting for His Son from heaven when the man of sin had not been revealed yet if the Rapture is post-trib? Elsewhere we are told there is a crown of righteousness given to those who **"love his appearing"** (See II Timothy 4:8). Paul wrote to Titus

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## II Thessalonians

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these words, **“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ”** (Titus 2:13). The words **“blessed hope”** means “happy expectation.” This was something to be looked for with happy expectation. Jesus spoke of His coming in this sense as a sudden event without any warning as in the days of Lot. The residents of Sodom knew nothing about what was about to happen and that event did not and could not take place until Lot was removed. With this thought in mind I would compel you to ask yourself why would the Thessalonians be troubled about the day of the Lord being at hand if it was synonymous with the Rapture? Notice verse two of our chapter: **“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.”** Now consider this. If Paul had taught them that the Rapture of the saints was at the end of the tribulation period then why would he tell them that they should not be troubled in mind as though the day of the Lord was at hand or present as the words mean? If they thought the day of the Lord was present, then they should be all excited if Paul had taught a post-trib Rapture. They should be looking for and longing for His coming for them with happy expectation, should they not? But that is not what Paul told them. He said the day of the Lord was not at hand which they must have thought because they had received a false word from an individual that was claiming to speak by the spirit or also in addition perhaps a forged letter as

from Paul. Notice Paul says that the day of the Lord (**“that Day”** as he calls it) could not come until a great apostasy took place first and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition as Paul calls him. The day of the Lord cannot come until this happens, yet Paul had told them to look for Christ and not the man of sin. If I thought the Rapture was post-trib then I would be looking for the Antichrist.

### THAT MAN OF SIN

Now let us look a little more deeply into the rest of this chapter. Cockrell says, “In II Thessalonians 2:4-12 there is a lengthy discourse on Antichrist and the tribulation. Those who suffer under the man of sin are said to be ‘they’ and ‘them,’ not ‘we’ and ‘us.’”

Paul says that the man of sin exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself to be God. So do we have anything in the Old Testament that speaks of this? What is meant by the temple of God? Is this something that has happened in history as some, such as John Gill, thinks? Has it already happened?

First, if we compare Paul’s statement we find a parallel in the book of Daniel where we read, **“And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done”** (Daniel 11:36). In the book of Daniel we find prophecy that concerns Israel which is called Daniel’s 70 weeks. Jesus also spoke of the “Abomination of Desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet.” There is much in the

book of Daniel concerning this man of sin, but more on that later.

### A FALSE REPORT

Before we explore some of Daniel’s prophecy concerning the man of sin, let us look more at what Paul declares in chapter two of II Thessalonians. First it might be good to point out that the Thessalonians perhaps believed this false report because of the tribulation they were going through. Christians have always had to endure tribulation and Paul said as much when he said, **“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”** (II Tim. 3:12). Edmond Hiebert says, “The Thessalonians, undergoing trying persecution, were being told by those promulgating this controverted teaching that they were already in that great and terrible period of anguish and tribulation called ‘the day of the Lord.’ The persecutions they were enduring seemed to confirm this view. The natural reaction to this teaching was fear and agitation. The apostle appeals to them in the interest of the very hope of “our gathering together unto him,” set forth in the first epistle (4:13-18), not to allow themselves to be shaken and troubled by this unwarranted teaching.”

### THE RESTRAINER

Next let us consider the restrainer. Paul says, **“And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth [will let], until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming”** (verses 6-8). So we see that the restrainer was holding back the mystery of iniquity even

in Paul’s day and would continue to hold back or restrain until he is taken out of the way, and when that happens then the man of sin will be revealed. Notice Paul calls the restrainer **“he”** which lets us know it is a person and not merely some impersonal force or government. John Gill, and I believe many of the reformers, believed the restrainer was the Roman Empire and when it lost its power the Popes came into power, thus he thought the Pope was the man of sin and the temple he sat in, declaring that he was God, was a true church at one time. But the church is called the house of God and when we examine Daniel’s prophecy we see that this does not harmonize. Those that take this position think the whole series of popes is the man of sin and then they are forced to make the 1260 days and 42 months in the Book of Revelation to become years, but even 1260 years has far since run out. The “man of sin” is not an office but one man (**“that man”**) just as Jesus Christ was one man and not an office of men. The Roman Empire is not the “he” that has held back for almost 2000 years and the man of sin has not yet been destroyed with the brightness of Christ’s coming. That coming is His glorious coming seen by the world when He destroys the man of sin and sets up His millennial kingdom. That coming is not speaking of the Rapture spoken of in I Thessalonians 4:13-17. So the person that is holding back has been holding back the “mystery of iniquity” for just shy of 2,000 years since Paul wrote this epistle. Who could this person be? Who could hold back for almost 2,000 years at a minimum? Well it can only be someone with all power and eternity. It can only be the

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# Light Contemplations

By Luke Austin  
of Cadillac, Michigan

"Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD" (Psalm 107:43).

## BAND-AID JESUS

I am sitting here trying to figure out how to say this and yet communicate my desire for you to know the true and living Savior. I pray you will understand that I say this for the sake of the readers so they might examine themselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves (II Cor. 13:5).

Anyone with eyes and an unbiased perspective can see that things are happening in our country quickly that should be causing red flags to go up. Party lines aside, when a social media platform silences a sitting president, red flag. When media outlets openly seek to silence opposition voices, red flag. When the ruling party seeks to disarm its citizenry on day one, red flag. Now I know there are some die-hard leftists who vote, but even the more moderate Democrat must be feeling a twinge of unease. Trouble is coming; we see the unveiled efforts of those that want to fundamentally change America. No longer in secret corners and in shady, dimly lit rooms, but in the open. And the product of all this trouble is "squeaky wheel Christianity." When the wheels squeak, I need some oil. When troubles come, I need God.

Politics is a reflection of the spiritual condition of a country, this is true. But my primary concern is for your soul. Where will you spend eternity? Eternally saved? Or eternally forsaken?

These troubles in our country have caused tons of "WD-40 Christians" to come out of the woodwork. People that I have known for 20 plus years who have never once uttered the name of Jesus except to curse are now calling on people to let Him in. Leaving the theological error aside, the problem is not that they are calling on Jesus. The problem is there is no proof they actually know Him. They are like the wayward sibling that moves away, gets into drugs and drink, spends all their money, then calls home when they need to make bail.

This is for your good. That you may know Jesus as Savior, not as Mr. Fix It. Yes, call on Jesus. First and foremost seek Him in the Bible, not your imagination. Seek Him while He may be found. But seek Him to save you from your sins. Seek Him to rescue you from yourself. Seek Him that you may have newness of life. Seek Him for an abundant life now. By seeking Him when you find yourself in a squeeze you prove you do not actually know Him. And you may be tempted to think that it is "unchristian" to question someone's salvation. But it is the most Christian thing I can do in times like these. Are you saved? Trouble is coming. Death is coming. Whether our country falls into communism or you die at a ripe old age, you will stand before God and give an account. Without Christ you will be found in your sins and cast into hell. Repent and believe the

gospel. **"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (II Peter 1:10). "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28).**

(Luke Austin is a member of the Cadillac Baptist Church of Cadillac, Michigan.)



## II Thessalonians

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Holy Spirit. But you ask, how can the Holy Spirit be removed when He is God and omnipresent? That He is God and present everywhere we do not disagree, but remember that the Holy Spirit came and empowered the Lord's Church in a special way. To this the Scriptures agree, for Jesus himself said, **"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me" (John 15:26).** Jesus again said, **"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come" (John 16:13).** And again, **"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."** (John 16:7). It is the Holy Spirit's special work in the Lord's local Churches that is in view here. Notice He is the **"Spirit of truth"**, and when He is taken out of the way apostasy comes, and the revelation of the great lie or the man of sin takes

place. The **"falling away"** spoken of in verse 2 is "apostasia" and means an active defection. It is not passive, but deliberate. It was translated **"to forsake"** in Acts 21:21. Some have claimed that this falling away is the Rapture, but the ones that are partakers of the Rapture are passive, and that is not the case with this falling away. It is apostasy. An active defection from the truth. Notice Paul says in our chapter, **"And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness"** (verses 11-12). And notice they have no love of the truth in verse 10. Is not the Lord's church the pillar and ground of the truth (I Tim. 3:15) and is not the Holy Spirit's work in the church to guide it into all truth? When the Lord's churches and all Christians are removed from the earth, then apostasy will have free reign.

## DANIEL'S 70 WEEKS AND THE CAREER OF THE MAN OF SIN

Back to Daniel's prophecy of the 70 weeks in Chapter 9. The reason for bringing this up is to show that there is a 7 year period yet to come, and the middle of that week is a 3.5 year period which is in harmony with 1260 literal days and not 1260 years. These 70 weeks are weeks of years which is easily proven by the time mentioned in the prophecy. These 70 weeks deal entirely with the nation of Israel (compare vs. 20 with 24 of chapter 9). The Church is not Israel, nor has it replaced Israel, and it has no part in the 70 weeks of years. Please notice that Messiah is cut off after 69 weeks (7+62) and there is a gap between the 69<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup>

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## II Thessalonians

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week. This is commonly called the parenthetical period. An unknown amount of time known as the church age. Daniel 9:27 deals with the man of sin making a covenant with Israel for 7 years (70<sup>th</sup> week) and in the midst or middle of the week he causes the sacrifice and oblation to cease. The A-millennial claims this to be Christ, but Christ never made a 7 year covenant with the nation of Israel. H. B. Ironside says, "Strange is it that many have supposed it was Prince Messiah Himself who was to confirm a covenant for one week. But when did He ever make such a covenant? The blood of the covenant which He shed upon the cross is not to confirm a covenant for seven years, but it is the blood of the everlasting covenant." The middle of a 7 year period is after 3.5 years (3.5+3.5=7). In the book of Revelation, 1260 days, 42 months and a time, times and half time are mentioned. And also in the book of Daniel these same time periods are mentioned and it makes no sense to convert 1260 days (3.5 years) into 1260 years. Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week is the time of Jacob's trouble. Without an in-depth study of the book of Daniel and the book of Revelation it is impossible to deal with all that involves the man of sin in the short space of this article. The point of bringing this up is to show that the beginning of the 70<sup>th</sup> week is unknown, but once it begins there is a specific amount of time that is mentioned. So, if Christ's coming for His saints is at the end of the tribulation period, then it would not be at a time as described by Christ as a time you think not (Luke 12:40) to the believer who knows the truth of God's Word. Also it might be asked, when does

He come with His saints (I Thess. 3:13) if He comes for His saints at the end of Jacob's Trouble?

So, we see two aspects of Christ's coming. One that is totally by surprise and secret for His saints, and the other is a glorious coming immediately after the tribulation of those days, which is a specific time period known as Jacob's trouble, and that with His raptured saints. He comes as a thief in the night (Matt. 4:43). The thief does not stay but leaves with the prize. But Christ's glorious coming as "King of Kings" is a time that would be known to those who understand Daniel's prophecy if the Antichrist is reigning. The temple mentioned by Paul must therefore be a rebuilt temple in which the sacrifices are re-instituted. Evidently, the Antichrist will be instrumental in bringing this about, but after 3.5 years he stops it, causing the sacrifice and the oblation to cease (Dan. 9:27), and sits in the temple declaring himself to be God, whom Christ will destroy with the brightness of His coming. Again when all this happens it is within a specific time period, but not so with the Rapture. Elder Milburn Cockrell points out the following: **"Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh"** (Matt. 24:44). The meaning of these words are dear. Believers are to be under the influence of a constant and general expectation of Christ's coming. He will come when we least expect Him: **"Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come"** (Matt. 24:42). These verses from Matthew 24 teach three things: First, the hour of our Lord's return is unknown to His people. Second, because we know not the exact time of His appearing, we must be in an

attitude of constant expectation and watchfulness. Third, the Lord will return unexpectedly, even in such an hour as His own people **"think not."**

It seems good to point out that Christ is to the Church the **"...bright and morning star"** (Rev. 22:16). As any good astronomy student knows, the morning star and evening star is the planet Venus which, because its orbit is between the earth and the sun, can only be seen right before sunrise or right after sunset. So, if Christ to us is the **"bright and morning star"** he appears to us before sunrise and when it is still dark. But Christ's glorious coming is to the world as the rising sun in all its glory (Malachi 4:1-2)."

### THE LAST TRUMP

Post-tribers have tried to say that the **"last trump"** that Paul spoke of in I Corinthians 15:52 and the **"trump of God"** in I Thessalonians 4:16 concerning the Rapture is the same as the seventh trumpet spoken of in the book of Revelation. The trumpet spoken of by Paul was at a moment of time but the trumpet spoken of in Revelation is a long trumpet and covers a long period of time. Notice the words **"But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets"** (Rev 10:7). Concerning the last three trumpets that will sound in the book of Revelation we read that **"Woe, woe, woe"** are pronounced to the inhabitants of the earth (Rev 8:13). The seventh trumpet in Revelation is a trumpet of woe.

### GREAT TRIBULATION

Another thing that needs to be pointed out is that because the words **"great tribulation"** are used and because Christians have always undergone persecution

and tribulation from unbelievers, that the great tribulation period is thought to just be more of the same. The difference is that the great tribulation period or "Jacob's Trouble" will be God bringing about tribulation upon this Christ rejecting world. **"Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ"** (II Thess. 1:6-8).

Satan may be used in some of this tribulation such as the locust that will come out of the bottomless pit in Revelation chapter 9, who will have the angel of the bottomless pit named "Apollyon" over them, but that will not happen until the fifth angel sounds his trumpet, thus God is sovereign over all these events that will take place. We see the same thing in our chapter in discussion here. The man of sin will be brought to power **"after the working of Satan"** via **"signs and lying wonders"** (vs. 9), but we also read that it is God that will send this **"strong delusion"** because they had no love for the truth (vs. 11).

### THE WRATH OF GOD

How come the seven vials in the book of Revelation are called the **"wrath of God upon the earth?"** Not the wrath of men, but the wrath of God. The word **"wrath"** is mentioned many times in the book of Revelation referring to the wrath of God, and yet Paul tells the Thessalonians **"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ"** (I Thess. 5:9).

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# Small Drops

By Joseph M. Sidders of  
Guntown, Mississippi

"My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God" (Deuteronomy 32:2-3).



that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified?"

Let us therefore pop in a piece of "holy-living-gum" and find comfort in naming the grace of God that we are experiencing this hour!

(Joseph Sidders is pastor of the Berea Baptist Church of Mantachie, Mississippi.)



## II Thessalonians

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### THE DAY OF CHRIST

Concerning the "day of Christ" or "the day of the Lord" as it is called in the Old Testament, we read of this day in many places, which is not a 24 hour period. I could not find one blessed thing concerning the "day of the Lord." In every case the context suggested an awful day. For one such example, Amos writes: **"WOE UNTO YOU THAT DESIRE THE DAY OF THE LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light"** (Amos 5:18)(Emp. LJJL). If this is synonymous with the coming of Christ for His saints then this verse makes no sense, for they are to desire His coming for them. Paul confirms this desire when he says, **"For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven"** (II Cor 5:2), which speaks of our resurrection, or rapture if we are still alive. If I thought the "day of

the Lord" in its entirety had to come before the Rapture then I would desire it, yet Amos declares woe to them that desire it. The Rapture is a "happy expectation" but the "day of the Lord" as described in the Old Testament is a day of gloom and the wrath of God.

### HOW COME

Since our subject is the "Rapture" and its relationship to II Thessalonians chapter two, I thought it appropriate to ask a few questions.

1. How come we never see the word "church" mentioned after chapter 3 of Revelation until chapter 22?

2. How come when John is told in Revelation 4:1 to **"come up hither,"** we see 24 elders in heaven. Angels are never call elders. These elders are saints and they all have crowns. Where did they get these crowns? This must have taken place at the "bema" or judgment seat of Christ.

3. How come the only other place in the book of Revelation where the command **"come up hither"** is used is when the two witnesses that were killed are raised from the dead and ascend up into heaven (Rev. 11:12)?

4. If Christ comes as a warring King at His glorious coming and He has already received His bride (see Rev. 19), then where is the time period that Deuteronomy mentions which forbids a newly married man from going to war for at least a year (Deut. 24:5)?

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, comparing II Thessalonians chapter 2 with the rest of Scripture it is hard to imagine that the Rapture happens at the end of "Jacob's Trouble", or any time after the revelation of the "man of sin."



### NAME THAT GRACE

I have been married this year, 16 years, and I have been around my in-laws now for 20. For as long as I can remember my father in-law has always made a point to celebrate whatever it was we were involved in at the time with a named piece of gum. If we were going to the movies he would ask "Joe how about a piece of movie-gum?" If we were on our way to a Bible conference he would ask "Joe how about some Bible-conference-gum?" If we were just driving down the road "Joe how about some traveling-gum?" Every time it would bring a smile to my face and seem to make whatever we were doing that much more enjoyable.

Should we not have the same experience with God's mercies? Elder Matthew Stepp challenged me once with naming the grace that I am experiencing. I think of the text in Hebrews 10:22-25: **"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."** What a wonderful provoking unto love and good works my dear brother

gave me! Rather than to be caught up in distractions and burdens of this life I am to look about me and start naming the grace that allows me to walk about freely in my home, or to play basketball with my son or to share the Gospel with the folks here in the Tupelo area!

It is a great blessing to look all around us and see the events in our lives as the sovereign grace of the Most High! Being a born-again believer, I no longer have to look at tasks such as going to my secular job or doing the dishes with such fleshly disdain, but I am to instead name this grace and pop in a piece of "going-to-work-gum" as I go about the work of serving my family and community. When faced with the challenge of leading my home or disciplining one of our children, my wife and I can be blessed in meditating on the blessing of being able to have children to begin with while we chew on a piece of "training-them-up-gum."

Naming the grace of God that I am experiencing allows me to see past the illusion of fear or despair that Satan laces all of our days with. It truly enables me to **"draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith"** as we saw above. Think about that for a moment, dear friend. I can know that the Lord is in each thing that I experience and therefore truly be content, for His promise to the elect was written in Hebrews 13:5: **"...I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."** How about Romans 8:28-30: **"And we know**

# If the Rapture

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**meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord**" (I Thess. 4:17). Next on our agenda will be seven years in Heaven with events like the "Judgment Seat of Christ." **"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad"** (II Cor. 5:10). And the "Marriage Supper of the Lamb" with His Baptist Bride, which will take place likely toward the end of that glorious seven years in Heaven as annotated in Revelation 19:7, **"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."** Praise the Lord, hallelujah! The third event would be coming back to Earth with our Saviour and Husband (if you are a Baptist) to establish a 1,000 year realm with King Jesus sitting on David's throne in Jerusalem, Canaan, Middle East, Planet Earth. More hallelujah's, praise God!

But what about those left behind at the Rapture? The chain of prophesied events are not blissful at all for those that **"...received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved (or raptured)"** (II Thess. 2:10). Imagine with me the response of those moral folk that might even be at a church service, if the Rapture were to happen on Sunday morning. Put yourself in the place of those forlorn souls turning off the lights and getting in their cars to return home or some other place to try to figure out what has happened. What will become of them? Selah! Think about it!

The Bible would be the place

to go to, beloved reader. I do not think many will look there, though. Most will look to the television and search for answers there, I believe. And Satan will have answers. They will be lies and deceptions, but that is not going to be any different from the fake news media of today that has strangled the truth all across this globe, stifling every country from the United Kingdom, to the Republic of the Philippines to the Cuban communist party. One of many good things that came out of the Trump administration's four years was the exposure of the liberal media as a tool of the Devil. I do not know if you have thought that far into it, but the Rapture will not only take every child of God out of this world, leaving only those poor, benighted souls of the reprobate and spiritually ignorant, but also the Bible says that the Holy Spirit, Who resides in our hearts, will also depart with them out of this present world. **"For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he (the Holy Spirit) who now letteth will let, until he (the Holy Ghost) be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked (Anti-Christ) be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders"** (II Thess. 2:7-9). After the Rapture, the Anti-Christ (who according to this text is already "mysteriously and iniquitously working" and walking in our midst) will be revealed. Not as a baby born demonically (although that may have happened 30+ years ago), but as a full grown adult, ready to release his charismatic siren song onto the frazzled corona virus

world of 2021.

You see, beloved reader, that if the Rapture were to occur today, it is only a surprise to humanity, not to our supremely sovereign Lord. God has already set in motion the events surrounding us to work out the perfect prophecies of His Holy Word. First and most importantly, the nation of Israel (actually mostly the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and Levi) has been reinstated in Palestine, with all of their preparations to 1) rebuild the temple in Jerusalem; 2) restart the daily sacrifices and 3) await a Messiah to establish a Millennial Kingdom, all according to the Old Testament prophecies. **"Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered"** (Dan. 8:11-12).

Secondly, the United Nations is already coalescing power to facilitate the AntiChrist as a leader within the European Union to take charge of a new world government alliance. **"And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many..."** (Dan. 8:23-25). The financial and economic

powers will institute the mark of the beast in computer chip fashion to bring the rebellious factions of the world under this beast's fell sway. **"And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. ...and his number is (666) Six hundred threescore and six"** (Rev. 13:16-18).

Thirdly, the established religions of the world are ecumenically merging just in time for the Roman Catholic church and Pope Francis I to take the reins of a very liberal and worldly church that will ride the Beast/Anti-Christ's meteoric ride to power. **"...I saw a woman (the Catholic Church) sit upon a scarlet coloured beast (the AntiChrist), full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus..."** (Rev. 17:3-6).

Fourthly, the rise of humanism and spiritualism with their seemingly opposite sciences of evolution and satanic worship are actually working together to assimilate the masses of ignorant scientists and witches alike that have no premise of

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# Little Hills

By Nathaniel Hille of  
Plant City, Florida



## SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON - BIBLE SURVEY #23 THE BOOK OF I KINGS

**TEXT:** I Kings 8:22-25

**DEVOTIONAL READING:** I Sam. 8:10-18; Deut. 17:14-20

**AIM:** Over-View of the Book of I Kings

**INTRODUCTION:** We now look at the 11th book of the Bible; the 6<sup>th</sup> in the Historical Section: Originally, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings were one book. When translated into Greek and English they were separated into two books. In this book, we will follow the life of Solomon and the subsequent kings of the Divided Kingdom: Israel (north), Judah (South) from the time of Saul's death till David's own death. In this lesson, we see the truth of what Jesus taught in His day: **"Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand"** (Matt. 12:25).

**I. AUTHOR:** Unknown, Jewish tradition holds that the prophet Jeremiah is the author.

**II. THEME:** In I Kings, we begin to see the results of perpetual disobedience unto the Lord. Yet, we also see the long-suffering and faithfulness of the Lord to His promises. We must remember, that all kings would be measured to that great quality of David: **"a man after his (the Lord's) own heart"** (I Sam. 13:14).

**III. OUTLINE:** A basic outline of I Kings

1. David's Last Days: I Kings 1:1-2-11
2. Solomon's Reign: I Kings 2:12-11:43
3. The Origin of The Divided Kingdom: I Kings 12:1-14:31
4. The Kings of Israel & Judah till Ahab: I Kings 15:1-16:27
5. The Reign of Ahab: I Kings 16:28-22:39
6. The Reigns of Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah: I Kings 22:40-53

**IV. KEY PERSON(S):**

1. God: God was still King over Israel.
2. Kings:

A. David: David still is a key person though he occupies a small portion of this book. The Lord did many things because of David's sake. We also see that the kings are held to that standard: **"a man after his own heart"** (I Sam. 13:14). Compare with I Kings 11:4; 15:3; 15:14 where it is said of different kings that their hearts were not perfect as David's heart was.

B. Solomon: I Kings 2:12-43—Solomon, the son of David, is God's chosen to succeed David in the throne. Solomon is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. Solomon is not perfect. We find that under Solomon's reign the Lord expanded the kingdom, Israel had great prosperity in every field, and peace in and among themselves as well as without (Prov. 16:7). Solomon finished building the wall around Jerusalem and the temple was built to house the ark of the covenant where Israel did worship the Lord. Solomon departed from the way of the Lord.

Through his marriages, many false practices were brought into Israel which God had forbidden.

C. Rehoboam & Jeroboam: These are the first two kings of the Divided Kingdom. Rehoboam was the rightful king. Jeroboam sought to usurp the kingdom. Here we find the birth of the Northern kingdom (Israel) and the Southern kingdom (Judah). Ten tribes went with Jeroboam. The tribes of Judah and Benjamin comprised the kingdom of Judah. Jeroboam sets up an altar like unto the worship of Jehovah in Jerusalem. This worship is set up out of convenience for his followers so they would not return to Judah and the Lord (I Kings 12:25-33).

D. Kings of Israel: Many kings succeeded Jeroboam. Every one of them did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. Not one did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord. Not one.

a. Nadab (I Kings 14:19-20), Baasha (I Kings 15:25-27), Elah (I Kings 16:8), Zimri (I Kings 16:15), Tibni and Omri (I Kings 16:21-22), Ahab (I Kings 16:29-32), Ahaziah (I Kings 22:40).

E. Kings of Judah: Judah also had a succession of kings. Many of them did that which was right in the sight of the Lord.

a. Abijah or (Abijah) (I Kings 14:31), Asa (I Kings 15:8), Jehoshaphat (I Kings 15:24), Jehoram (I Kings 22:50).

3. Prophets: II Chron. 36:15-16—This shows us how the prophets were predominantly treated by the nation of Israel and eventually Judah. There were prophets of which God raised up to aid the kings that they might serve the Lord. Shemaia, Hanani, Ahijah, Jehu, Micaiah, Unknown prophets. There were also false prophets, such as the prophets of Baal.

A. Elijah: The most notable prophet in I Kings. Is the prophet Elijah. He was mightily used by the Lord in the Northern Kingdom of Israel during the reign of king Ahab—the most wicked of all the kings of Israel. Although Ahab was the most wicked, the Lord had raised up a prophet who was equal to the task. The most famous of all of Elijah's confrontations with Ahab is the "contest" between Baal and Jehovah atop Mt. Carmel (I Kings 18). Despite all the endeavors, efforts of the prophet Elijah, yet Ahab never turned unto the Lord, but continued in his wickedness doing evil in the sight of the Lord.

NOTES: The students (with aid of the teacher) should comprise a chart of each: Israel, then Israel and Judah—of each king. The chart should show the order of the kings, the prophets (if mentioned) who were raised up during their reign, and if they followed the Lord or not.

(Nathaniel Hille is pastor of the Bible Baptist Church of Plant City, Florida.)

## If the Rapture

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truth to stand upon. The fables of "The Big Bang" hold no more water than the sorcery of heroin, marijuana and cocaine delusions of grandeur. This current world population of 2021 is prime fodder for the twisted lies of the great deceiver. There is absolutely no absolute truths anymore,

especially with the departure of all those millions that read only the King James Version and her equivalent translations in other non-English countries. **"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. ... evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceive. ... Ever learning, and never able to come to the**

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## The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

1. What do you wish your church members knew about their pastor?

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**"And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak"** (Eph. 6:19-20).

I would wish that they understood how important their prayers for me and other preachers of the Gospel really are. I would wish that they would count it as a solemn responsibility to daily offer supplication and fervent prayer for their pastor. I often feel that I am not up to the weighty task of pastoring, preaching, witnessing, and ministering to saints and sinners. I need God's wisdom as I seek to explain the Word of God through teaching and preaching in four separate messages nearly every week. I desire that my preaching would glorify God, build up the saints in the most holy faith, and arrest the attention of sinners that need to be saved. I need God's wisdom to know what to preach, when to preach it, and how to preach it. I also need much grace to balance the responsibility of the ministry with the responsibility to minister to the needs of my family. The last year has added the challenge of homeschooling our 13 year old granddaughter who is going into

8th grade, and our 11 year old grandson who is going into 6th grade.

Oh, how I long to be used of the Lord as I do the work of the ministry in the Lord's church and in my family! Yet I am keenly and painfully aware of my weaknesses and frailties as a poor sinner. I would hope that the members of Mt. Pleasant Missionary Baptist church know that their pastor loves them and desires to prepare them to stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. May God grant pastor and members alike the ability to serve the Lord with a greater urgency and sense of purpose as the coming of the Lord draws nigh!

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I would say the thing most I would want my church members to know about me is how much I love the Lord, and how much I love them, and as Paul said, **"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish"** (Eph. 5:25-27).

My prayer for them is that they

meet the Lord **"not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."**

Other than that, I do not think there is much to know, I have been an open book to them. They should know I weep and pray for them always.

**"Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ"** (Acts 20:19-21).

**"For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you"** (II Cor. 2:4).

As their pastor, I only want the best for them; that is what I would want them to know. God Bless!

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Number one on the list is that they might know how much he loves them! I understand that some already do, because I can tell how much they love me. But for the ones that might have a harder time connecting, I wish they knew that I am not going to judge them for their fears and concerns, because of the respect that love brings into that pastoral

relationship. My heart literally breaks when theirs does and the pain and sorrow that they are going through is going through me and all the other faithful members of the flock. The ones that know that special love, come to me all the time with both struggles and victories; differences and encouragements. If all of my members could know that it is okay to disagree in a respectful manner, and that we will still hug and shake hands without any change in the love of our relationship, is my continual request to God. **"And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved"** (II Cor. 12:15). Every pastor who is serving his God and flock emulates this love of the apostle, and I am glad that it is very rare among Baptists that he would end the verse that way. **"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. ... Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another"** (I John 4:7, 11).

I also would hope that my congregation would know how weak I am, both in the flesh and in the Spirit. **"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do"** (Rom. 7:18-19). Holding the office of pastor does not mean that we have graduated from our sinful bodies yet. I know that my members understand that, but sometimes it is easy to forget to pray for more than just next Sunday's sermon. The flesh constrains us, and the temptations may be different,

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## The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. As a pastor, what is the greatest need in our churches today?

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**"Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest"** (Luke 10:2).

**"Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest"** (John 4:35).

The greatest, and only need, (in my opinion) in our churches today, is labourers who love the Lord and have a concern for lost souls. The gospel must go out to this lost and dying world.

The great commission, as we Baptists call it, was the greatest thing that Christ left His Church to do. **"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen"** (Matt. 28:18-20).

This is the greatest need and the least that is being done in many churches, and as I said, that is

my opinion. I am sure there are some churches that are making an effort, but not as many as there used to be I do not believe. God Bless!

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**"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen"** (Eph. 3:21).

No doubt there are a number of ways this question could be answered and addressed. Our churches are made up of people who are sinners saved by sovereign grace, so I am sure there are a number of deficiencies and sins that could be highlighted.

If I could narrow the focus to the greatest need in our churches, it would have to be the sincere desire to bring glory to God in everything we do as individuals, as families, as members of the Lord's church, and as citizens in society at large. I realize that I have just made a very sweeping statement, but I fear that most people in our churches rarely take the time to ponder whether or not they are bringing glory to God in their lives. I Corinthians 10:31 declares: **"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."** Colossians 3:16-17, 23-24 states: **"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom;**

**teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him... And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ."**

The Lord Jesus Christ paid our sin debt in full through the ransom price of His own blood. He died in our stead as a vicarious substitute, was buried, and rose from the dead to give us the gift of eternal life. His one offering put away the sins of all His elect. His perfect righteousness was imputed to us the moment the Holy Spirit regenerated us and gave us the gift of saving faith to believe the Gospel. Beyond that, the Lord then directed and led us to submit to scriptural baptism in the kind of church that He organized during His earthly ministry. The kind of church where He alone is Head and Lawgiver. The kind of church that He promised would exist in perpetuity, yea even into the eternal ages. What an honor and a holy privilege to be a member of a New Testament Baptist Church! In light of such grace upon grace, we should solemnly examine whether or not we are striving with earnest diligence to bring glory to Christ as we serve Him in His church. Is our worship in spirit and in truth? Do we love gathering with the saints of God as a congregation of the Lord Jesus? Are we praying from a heart bursting with love and gratitude to our Lord? Are we preferring others above ourselves? Are we clothed with humility? Are we exalting the Word of God by taking heed to its precepts and

applying its principles to our daily life in cheerful obedience? Are we paying our tithes and giving our offerings with a cheerful and thankful attitude? Are we heartily engaged in the preaching of the Gospel at home and abroad through witnessing and missions? Pastors and Elders, are you faithfully preaching the whole counsel of God, feeding the flock of God, and carefully explaining the texts of Scripture you handle? Is every aspect of the Fruit of the Spirit evident in our membership, and manifested in a practical way? Are we really devoted to bringing glory to God in our churches?

If we would sincerely meditate upon the questions posed above it would go a long way in determining if we really are consecrated to the holy task of bringing glory to God. Gone would be just going through the motions of church attendance. Gone would be the half hearted, distracted manner in which we worship the Lord. Gone would be pride, self exaltation, and the desire to please men rather than God. Gone would be the coldness of spirit and apathy that often fills our hearts. Oh Lord God, set our hearts on fire with a holy zeal and a ready resolve to bring glory to the Most High! May our churches be earnestly engaged in bringing glory to the only One who is worthy of worship and praise, the Lord Jesus Christ!

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As I considered the question, several things came to mind. But

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## Forum Question #1

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but they are just as real and the pastors, their wives, and families need much prayer as they live in “glass boxes” to some extent. I can not complain really, because the church I pastor does spend much time in prayer for us and part of this “wish list” is that they would know how much I do appreciate those desired and necessary prayers. I love the context of the Apostle Paul’s receipt of love from the Philippian Baptists: **“But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God. But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus”** (Phil. 4:18-19). Now that is a blessed relationship!

But it is not just the physical needs of a pastor that the church members have been faithful to pray for. That the Lord would open up the Word of God for her pastor and teachers is filling a desire of my heart. It blesses my soul to hear the men of the church pray for the services, and to have folks give assurances that throughout the week they will be praying for us. Praying for the study time and for clarity of thought while delivering the message from God is essential. I remember frequent times in my ministry that I have been stumped while studying for a message that just would not seem to come together, then all at once the Holy Spirit gives clearness and purpose. I have learned to praise God and thank Him for whichever faithful member just then took the time to pray for me. Wow! That really humbles me, when I recognize the necessity of love and power.

Selah! Think about it!

The other thing I would like for the members to know is how it makes me rejoice when they want to talk about God’s Word, ask questions, or have a Bible study (formal or informal). Some of the highlights of my pastorate are the comments, suggestions, and precious thoughts that a worship service may have given them. As several members (or sometimes just one) stop on the way out to hash out some thoughts or questions about the Bible or God, it makes my heart thrill. The several times that we have had Bible studies in the fellowship hall over the years has made some special memories and bonded us closer as church members—brothers and sisters in Christ.

Lastly, to be called and entrusted with prayer requests is a blessed part of pastoring. To share the intimate needs of folks that we love and care for is a blessed privilege and not a burden. Please do not apologize for asking for prayer and God’s blessings. Selah! Think about it!

MATTHEW STEPP



## Forum Question #2

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although it sometimes seems hearts are cold, I believe we have love in our churches today. After all, we have been transformed, and although we may not be perfect at it, we, as God’s children, will naturally love. I have seen too many broken hearts and too many tear-stained eyes of sympathy and concern to doubt that we have love. Faith, too, is evident in our knowledge and doctrine, that God, Himself has promised to sustain and keep pure in our churches. **“But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how**

**thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth”** (I Tim. 3:15). **“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”** (Matt. 16:18). Selah! Think about it!

The greatest need, in my opinion as a pastor, is for the grace of hope. God’s people, like the children of Israel of yore, need to be continually reminded to hope. It is not that we do not know, it is just that we so often forget and thereby lose our hope. Remember Mrs. Job? **“Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil...”** (Job 2:9-10)? She knew God was sovereignly in control, hence the blasphemous curse directed at Him, not Satan. She had not lost her faith, but she had lost her hope. In our own times of trial, whether Wuhan virus or government politics related, we need to remember this Christian philosophy of redemption and hope. If we get sick; if our loved ones get cancer; if we find ourselves getting weaker with age do not lose our hope of a Great Physician and our eternal retirement plan settled by the blood of Jesus Christ. Hope in that, beloved reader. **“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever”** (Ps. 23:6).

How often have we said along with Elijah, **“Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left**

**alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace”** (Rom. 11:3-5). Ah, the grace of hope. We are not alone in our stand for the truth. Whether we look back at the trail of blood where the forefathers of faith (and hope) have been persecuted much more than us, and stood firmly for the same truths belonging also to the Big Creek Baptist Church, or look laterally at the persecuted Christians and martyrs in the Middle East, China, North Korea, Russia, or under tyrants in Africa and the East Indies, we can take hope that the Lord’s churches are not laboring in vain.

Perhaps you have given up praying for revival in America? Take hope! The same God that restored hope via repentance in Nineveh gifted Peter’s Acts 2 audience with a fateful pricking of their hearts, and that same God can save our children and grandchildren if we do not give up hope. Pray with hope. Pray with blessed assurance. **“...let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not”** (Jonah 3:8-9). Hope! Grace is still irresistible regeneration, unconditional election, and particular redemption. Hallelujah!

Perhaps we just need a good sermon on the hope of the Second Coming? The very word rapture

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## Forum Question #2

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has its source in the visible snatching away of His saints. **“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching”** (Heb. 10:23-25). If we retain our hope, even the required enduring patience will seem but a fleeting moment before our Beloved arrives. **“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing”** (II Tim. 4:7-8). Selah! Think about it!

MATTHEW STEPP



## If the Rapture

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**knowledge of the truth”** (II Tim. 3:1, 13, 7).

Fifthly, the rise of radical and extremist Islam, primarily in the Shiite branches is providing the counterbalance of force to the Anti-Christ's primarily Christian/Catholic crusaders that have formed an alliance to protect the Fig Tree (secular) nation of Israel as they rebuild the temple. The horrific wars that are going to be unleashed in the first 3.5 years of the Great Tribulation will cost this trembling globe fully one half of her current population of nearly eight billion souls! As

the Red Horseman of Islam rides forth, swinging his bloody scimitar, famine on his Black Horse will follow, as will the Pale Horse of death and hell. **“And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth”** (Rev. 6:8). But we will get more into that later on as we calculate two billion casualties in this verse plus another two billion yet more before all of the trumpets have sounded, all within the first forty-two months of the Great Tribulation.

Sixthly, as God is lining up all the parameters of destruction, He has allowed nuclear proliferation to occur in many countries around this world. It would be hard to imagine the magnitude of the destruction of even that first war in the first 21 months after the Rapture, without the usage of nuclear bombs. The Bible predicts their usage in many prophesies of billowing smoke and catastrophic power. **“A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them”** (Joel 2:3). **“And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth”** (Zech. 14:12). These are not the only passages that are incomprehensible without bombing and radiation.

Lastly, is the political geography of 2021, with the resurgence of Russia, China and India into their respective places of prophecy, as Gog and Magog, as well as the armies of the East, they will prepare to take their positions of ignominy in the last days. The European Union is peaking at just the right time to provide a serious base of power for the Anti-Christ, using the Daniel prophesies of a mighty Holy Roman Empire resurrected to do Satan's will, yet again. And again, as mentioned, Islam is in place to be the King of the South. The Lord has not neglected attention to any part of these puzzle pieces, as He masterfully manipulates Satan's worldly kingdoms. **“And I will bring upon that land all my words which I have pronounced against it, even all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah hath prophesied against all the nations. For many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of them also: and I will recompense them according to their deeds, and according to the works of their own hands”** (Jer. 25:13-14).



## Joy of the Lord

(Continued from page 1) ♦

the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could

understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law. And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up: And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground. Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place. So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.

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# Joy of the Lord

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**So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved. And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them”** (Neh. 8:1-12).

**“And the priests; Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Michaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah, with trumpets; And Maaseiah, and Shemaiah, and Eleazar, and Uzzi, and Jehohanan, and Malchijah, and Elam, and Ezer. And the singers sang loud, with Jezrahiah their overseer. Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced: for God had made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off”** (Neh. 12:41-43). In our text passages we read about some times when the people would pause from their mortal labors, and they would read the Word, sing songs, and worship the God of Israel. I believe that on these occasions the people found strength in the Lord and their sorrows and troubles did not seem so heavy, and joy filled their hearts as they contemplated the glories of God and the blessings of knowing and serving such a God.

**“The king shall joy in thy strength, O LORD; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice”** (Ps. 21:1)! Let us think about how, why, and where the saints of God can and should show forth joy in the world that we live in: and, how that joy gives us strength to serve, to honor and to obey and follow our God.

## JOY IN THE LAND OF SORROW

I reckon that the world of men will never be an overly happy place. There are so many difficulties that we face in this life. There is trouble, there is poverty, there is sickness, and there is death. When men in a certain place, or in a particular family seem to have finally arrived at a place where they will find happiness and peace in this world; then sickness, sorrow, or death will come to them, and all of their happiness and all of their peace will fade away.

You and I who are saved are not like them. We may find happiness or peace in this world on a certain level, or for a certain period of time. However, our true joy, and our true peace, comes from the Heavens above, and is administered to us in a spiritual fashion rather than relying on the physical world or the pleasures and happiness which the mortal realm may provide. Sure, we go through difficult times, and certainly we, too must deal with sickness, sorrow, and death. And yet, we can always find relief in the person of Jesus Christ. And it is always true that the joy that His presence brings us, can give us strength to persevere in this world in which we live.

When the world opposes us, and when sadness and sorrow seem to be our fate; then, Jesus Christ will come to us in the person of the Holy Spirit, and our sorrow will be turned into joy. **“Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the**

**anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you”** (John 16:20-22). Of course, the immediate application of these words of the Lord would have been when He was taken from His disciples, crucified, slain, buried, and then He would arise again. Praise the Lord that His people would find joy in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ!

However, even in a general sense, and in the lives of the children of God through the ages since the time of the resurrection of Christ, there is still much sorrow to endure, and many sad times that may seem to overwhelm us from time to time. Still, we have our Lord, and His presence brings us joy and our strength is recovered. We can endure, and we can continue on in the course that He has laid for us. **“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds’ feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments”** (Hab. 3:17-19). Just to contemplate the glories of salvation, should bring joy to the treasured saint of God, no matter the sorrow that may confront him in this present world. Anne Steele wrote the following hymn:

*Eternal Source of joys divine,*

*To thee my soul aspires;*

*O could I say, “The Lord is mine,”*

*’Tis all my soul desires.*

*Thy smile can give me real joy,  
Unmingled and refined;  
Substantial bliss, without alloy,  
And lasting as the mind.  
Thy smile can gild the shades of woe,  
Bid stormy trouble cease,  
Spread the fair dawn of heaven below,  
And sweeten pain to peace.  
My hope, my trust, my life, my Lord,  
Assure me of thy love;  
O speak the kind transporting word,  
And bid my fears remove.  
Then shall my thankful powers rejoice,  
And triumph in my God,  
Till heavenly rapture tune my voice  
To spread thy praise abroad.*

## JOY IN THE PLACE OF HATRED

The world of men is not just a place where sorrow and sadness can afflict us, but this is also often a mean place—the race of men is full of hatred and enmity. It is hard to constantly present a joyful demeanor in such a place and time as ours. The world that we live in, in particular, these United States of America, seems to be getting more and more bitter, and full of hatred one for another. It does not seem to be that there is much in the way of compassion, kindness, and charity in this place we live.

In our society, people show their strength through their selfish, mean, and hateful actions. This is the way of men, and this is the way of the world. There is no quarter given; the competition for power, pleasure, and possessions is extreme. Such worldly men and women only want to satisfy their own desires, and seek to accomplish their own purposes, regardless of the cost to others. These miserable persons will do anything to get to the top of their profession, or to reach the desires of their hearts; and they will do anything necessary to tear down those who dare to oppose them, or even those who may just happen

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# Joy of the Lord

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to be in their way as they scramble for the mortal and earthly prize they seek. Let me refer you to a Psalm that speaks of the condition of those who are consumed with the pursuit of worldly treasures and who are full of contempt for others: **“Why standest thou afar off, O LORD? why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble? The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined. For the wicked boasteth of his heart’s desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the LORD abhorreth. The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts. His ways are always grievous; thy judgments are far above out of his sight: as for all his enemies, he puffeth at them. He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity. His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue is mischief and vanity. He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor. He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor: he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net. He croucheth, and humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones. He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see it”** (Ps. 10:1-11).

And yet, where is the joy? Are any amongst these strong and mighty politicians, millionaires, power-brokers, intellectuals, or elitists really happy in their present condition? They may

seem strong and capable to others, but what has their worldly strength, their worldly ways, and their all-consuming desire to impose their way of life on others done for them? What has it really gained them? They are often mean-spirited, spiteful, and selfish individuals, with no one really to treasure and with whom they are able to enjoy the fruits of their labors.

I reckon that you and I, as servants of God, and as lovers of Jesus Christ, can find more joy in the Lord, than they can find in all of the possessions and pleasures this world has to offer. These eager and obsessed persons of the world have given away every real joy and peace in this life, in order to gain a prize that will never truly satisfy them. They treat each other, and all of those who resist them, with hatred, animosity, and contempt; and seem to never have a civil or compassionate desire to express to others. The world of men may vainly believe that their accomplishments prove them to be strong, and their successes are badges of their commitment to do whatever it takes to make their desires turn into reality. But that is not real strength. All of these mortal accomplishments will only be useful for a while. For every successful titan of industry, there are likely millions who have sought the same prizes, who have floundered and failed often with terrible and awful results.

If you want to see real strength, consider the faithful saints of the Lord. Though they may not have much in this life, they at least have happiness with one another; the people of God can at least share a civil word with one another; the children of God can at least find peace and joy in the presence of each other and God. Truly, I believe that peace and joy

are more readily available to the compassionate, the caring, and the considerate souls amongst us. I reckon there is more joy in doing good for others, than can ever be found in a lifetime of doing only for oneself. True strength is found in the hearts and minds of the caring and the forgiving. True joy is found through a pursuit of God and the goodness found in Him and in His people. These are delights that cannot be found in the mean-spirited world of today. **“And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in his salvation. All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him”** (Ps. 35:9-10)?

We, the Christians, should oppose hatred with love. We should display compassion in the face of rude or mean behavior. We should show joy and happiness when others seem to only be able to complain or rebel against the status quo. And why not? We know the Lord! His strength, and His person can make us able to live above the hatred and animosity of this world that we live in! John Newton once wrote,

*More of thy presence, Lord, impart,  
More of thy image let me bear;  
Erect thy throne within my heart,  
And reign without a rival there.*

*Give me to read my pardon sealed,  
And from thy joy to draw my strength;  
To have thy matchless love revealed  
In all its height, and breadth, and length.*

*Grant these requests, I ask no more,  
But to thy care the rest resign;  
Sick or in health, or rich or poor,  
All will be well if thou art mine.*

Let me give you a famous passage of Scripture that would describe the lives and the desires

of the people of God, as compared to the lives and desires of those who love the world. **“But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful”** (Luke 6:27-36). This type of forgiving and gracious man may not seem strong in the eyes of the world. But, I think that it is good for us, as we examine the times in which we live, and as we behold the bitterness and the hatred that is all around us; where is the joy? Will we find joy by living like the world? True joy will be found in being strong in the ways and the words of God. To live as He has required of us, may seem to be weak as the world sees us. But what do we care? Have they found

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# Joy of the Lord

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anything better in their bitter and hateful lifestyles? I think not! We have the Lord, and that is all we need.

## JOY IN THE WORLD OF DESTRUCTION

This world is headed for judgement and destruction. But we can find joy and strength in our God and Saviour. **“The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him. The LORD is their strength, and he is the saving strength of his anointed”** (Ps. 28:7-8).

It may seem that everything is falling apart around us. It may seem like the world is descending into sin and chaos. Well, in many ways these thoughts ought to be legitimately considered, and there is some validity to these expressions concerning the condition of the world. This world will not last forever, as it is. And things are getting worse because the end is at hand. The world is still caught up in the things of this mortal realm, seeking some form of joy or pleasure in a place that is soon to be judged and destroyed. Consider the words of John the Beloved: **“I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the**

**Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever”** (I John 2:14-17). Truly, there is no strength to be found amongst men, or in this world in which we live, which is able to help us and give us victory over what terrors and judgment awaits this present world. We must find our strength, as John has instructed us, in the Person of God, in the love of the Father for His children. When we consider the joys and pleasures that are found in God and in the love that He has for us, all of the joys of this world seem to fade

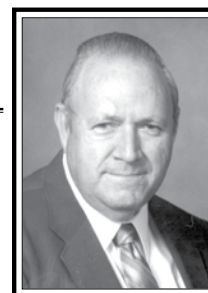
away.

All that is dear to this world, and its inhabitants will one day be destroyed. All that we see around us, all that our mortal eyes see, and all that mortal hands have made will one day pass away and will be no more. Rather than being a sad thought for those of us who have been saved, this must be a hopeful proposition that resides within our breasts. For indeed, our hearts burst with joy as we anticipate that world which is made new, and the kingdom of our dear Saviour!



## From the Pen of a Country Preacher

Milburn R. Cockrell  
(1941 - 2002)



## The Limited Atonement

**“I lay down my life for the sheep”** (John 10:15).

The central theme of all the Bible is the atonement of Jesus Christ. The types and shadows of the Old Testament pointed to it. The two ordinances of the New Testament look back to it. True Believers in all ages gazed upon it as the true source of their salvation. The atonement is the theme of the gospel and the ground of all Christian hope.

It is regrettable that this weighty theme has been the center of such unrelenting controversy across the centuries. Christians cannot agree as to what the design of the Saviour's death was. Such questions arise as: What was accomplished by the sacrifice of Christ? Did He offer Himself for every individual man without exception, or all men without distinction? Did the Savior make

the salvation of all men possible, or did He render certain the salvation of the elect of God?

There exists today two primary views of the atonement of Christ. There is what is called a limited atonement and unlimited atonement, or some times said to be a definite atonement and an indefinite atonement. Some call the two ideas particular redemption and universal redemption.

Those who hold Christ made an atonement for the whole human race without exception believe in a universal atonement. This theory has Christ making a general atonement and leaving the application of it in the hands of man. Those who teach a limited atonement believe Christ died for the elect only and that He in no sense died for the non-

elect who perish. This view makes the atonement beneficial to all for whom Christ died.

The term “limited atonement” could be applied to Arminians as well as Calvinists. Arminians limit the power of the atonement. They have Christ dying for a great multitude who shall perish. In limiting the application of the atonement to the believer, they, too, are guilty of preaching a limited atonement---a doctrine they profess to hate. Calvinists do not limit the power of the atonement, for we believe it is efficient for all for whom it was made. We limit it in extent but not in power.

The phrase “limited atonement” has been criticized because it seems to imply a shortage in the death of Christ. Because of this criticism some have substituted such words as “particular” or “definite.” But any of the terms are acceptable to me for all three mean Christ died for the elect of God and for them only.

Those who teach particular redemption do not lessen the value of Christ's redemption. The value of the atonement is to be measured by the dignity of the Person making it. Since Christ suffered in the Divine-human Person the value of His sufferings is infinite. We believe the atonement is unlimited in its power to save all of the elect, and that it is limited only in the sense of being for particular persons.

### WHAT ABOUT IT?

Dear friend, do you believe Jesus Christ died for all men without exception? If your answer is, “Yes,” then I would ask you, “Why are not all men saved by it?” You would probably reply, “Because they do not believe.” But if Christ died for all the sins of all men did He not die for the sin of

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unbelief? If Jesus Christ died for the sin of unbelief, then why must the sinner be punished for being guilty of this sin?

There are only three possible answers to my last two questions. First, believing Christ died for all the sins of all men with out exception---even unbelief, you could declare all men will be saved without exception. While this view is consistent with your profession about the death of Christ, you know it is not according to Bible truth. The Bible makes it plain some will perish in their sins and suffer in Hell (John 8:24; Rev. 21:8). Therefore, the first possible answer is unacceptable.

Second, you could declare that Christ died for all the sins of all men except unbelief. Peradventure you take this position you have become guilty of limiting the atonement and proving Christ did not die for all the sins of all men. You now allege He did not die for unbelief, then this sin can never be forgiven. Since the Bible says God concluded all in unbelief (Rom. 11:32), you have reprobated all men to Hell. This view is ever unacceptable since it leaves all to perish in unbelief.

Third, you may agree with me that Christ died for all the sins of the elect---even the sin of unbelief. This view is logical and consistent with the Scriptures. This is to take the position that Christ died for all men without distinction, but not all men without exception. This is the historical view of our Baptist forefathers.

## HISTORY SPEAKS

In 1655 the Particular Baptists of the Midlands said in their confession: "That Christ Jesus was in the fullness of time manifested

in the flesh being born of a woman and being perfectly righteous gave Himself for His elect to redeem them unto God by His blood."

The London Confession of 1644, Article XVII, reads: "Touching His Priesthood, Christ being consecrated, hath appeared once to put away sin by the offering and sacrifice of Himself, and to this end hath fully performed and suffered all those things by which God, through the blood of His cross in an acceptable sacrifice, might reconcile His elect only. . ."

The Second London Confession of 1677, Chapter VIII, Sections 5 and 6 reveal their belief in a limited atonement. "The Lord Jesus by His perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself. . . procured reconciliation, and purchased an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of Heaven, for all those whom the Father had given unto Him. Although the price of redemption was not actually paid by Christ, till after His incarnation, yet the virtue, efficacy, and benefit thereof were communicated to the elect in all ages successively. . ." The same is found in the Philadelphia Baptist Confession in 1742.

The Articles of Faith of the Mississippi Baptist Association of 1807 set forth this doctrine. Article 7 reads: "We believe there is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who by the satisfaction which He made to law and justice, in becoming an offering for sin, has by His most precious blood, redeemed the elect from under the curse of the law, that they might be holy and without blame, before him in love."

## SCRIPTURAL PROOF

Baptists have always believed in the limited atonement because the Bible teaches this doctrine. Jesus Christ said: "**I am the good**

**shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep**" (John 10:11). In verse 15 He said: "**As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.**" The Latin Vulgate Version reads "for my sheep" as does Wickcliff's Version of 1380 and Rheims of 1582. The Ethiopic Version renders it: "I lay down my life for the redemption of my sheep."

The Greek preposition "for" (Greek HUPER) in John 10:11, 15 means "In behalf of" or "in the place of." This language means Christ died in the place of the sheep. This is an actual substitutionary atonement. He gave His life that all His sheep would have eternal life.

Seeing Christ laid down His life for the sheep, then we see the atoning character of His work was for a particular people. It was for those the Father gave Him (John 10:29). It is the sheep who are given eternal life (John 10:28) and who follow the good Shepherd (John 10:27). Do all men have eternal life and follow Christ? Certainly not! Hence not all men are sheep. Jesus said: "**But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep.**" Do not try to reverse the order of Christ's words. He did not say as some would like for Him to have said: "Ye are not my sheep because ye believe not." He said: "**Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep,**" showing that only the sheep He died for will believe. Since Christ died for the sheep and some are not sheep, then it follows that Christ did not die for all men without exception.

## DIED FOR THE ELECT

The Bible makes it plain Christ died to deliver the elect from the condemnation which their sins deserved: "**Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.**

**Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died**" (Rom. 8:33-34).

Those for whom Christ died are here called "**God's elect.**" These in virtue of His death are free from condemnation. The sentence of condemnation which their sins deserved was executed in their Substitute. His death made a full pardon for our sins. It would be inconsistent with the justice of God for one of the elect to be condemned for whom Christ died.

This passage has no meaning if Christ died for any that He shall some day condemn in judgment. Hence Christ died for none except those who escape judgment. In these verses it is plain that none for whom He died can be condemned. If condemnation be forbidden by His death, then that condemnation must be prohibited with respect to all for whom He died. Since His death made satisfaction for their sins, both accusation and condemnation are rendered impossible!

## JUSTIFIED BY HIS DEATH

Those Christ represented in His death are said to be justified---not offered justification but given justification by His death. Of Christ Isaiah said: "**By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities**" (Isa. 53:11). Here we see the same persons Christ bare the sins of are also justified. The writer adds in verse 12: "**He bare the sin of many.**" Christ justified "many" since He died for "Many." "Many" is a great multitude, but "many" is not all men without exception.

In Matthew 26:28 Christ declared: "**For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins of many.**" Hebrews 9:28

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informs us: **“So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.”** The “many” Christ died for are the “many” ordained to eternal life (Acts 13:48), the “many” who receive the gift of grace (Rom. 5:15), the “many” brethren of Christ (Rom. 8:29), the “many” who receive eternal life (John 17:2, and the “many” sons Christ engaged to bring to glory (Heb. 2:10).

Every person Jesus Christ died for will be justified. Of the Redeemer Paul said: **“Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification”** (Rom. 4:25). Observe **“our offenses”** is connected with **“our justification.”** The same persons are under consideration in both cases. The elect are **“...justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus”** (Rom. 3:24). Romans 5:19 declares: **“...by the obedience of one (Christ) shall many be made righteous”** (Rom. 5:19). The death of Christ did not make justification possible, it secured the actual justification of those for whom He died.

## RANSOMED A PEOPLE

The Scripture teaches Christ ransomed a people. **“Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many”** (Matt. 20:28). Those ransomed by Christ are said to be “many.” Many is not all men without exception. It is the many actually ransomed by the blood of Christ. The nature of a ransom is such that when paid it automatically frees the persons for whom it was intended. Otherwise, it is not a true ransom.

If Jesus Christ paid the ransom price for all men, the merits of

His death must be communicated to all men without exception. If the benefits of Christ’s death are communicated to all men, then God cannot justly inflict eternal punishment on any Christ ransomed. Jehovah would be unjust in demanding double payment, first from Christ and then from the sinner.

Hence it must be seen that Christ died for the elect of God. It was for them alone He paid the ransom price. Divine Justice demands that Christ pay the exact price the elect owed. Likewise Divine Justice required that all be ransomed for whom the price was paid.

## DEATH AND INTERCESSION INSEPARABLE

The atonement and the intercessory work of Christ is the twofold work of Christ in His priestly office. You cannot separate the atonement from His priestly ministry in Heaven. Of Christ the prophet said: **“He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors”** (Isa. 53:12).

The benefits of Christ’s death and His intercession, which is based upon His atonement, are equally applied to the same persons. The Bible teaches that Christ does not intercede for all men but only for those given to Him by the Father. **“I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine,”** said Jesus Christ (John 17:9). Would Christ die for all men without exception and turn around and refuse to pray for them? Certainly not! He prayed for those the Father gave Him, and He died only for those given Him by the Father.

## EVILS OF UNIVERSAL ATONEMENT

The theory of a universal

# James and John



Caleb Newell, 2021

**“And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him”** (Matthew 4:21-22).

atonement is a bundle of contradictions which reduces God to a level lower than that of a man. A Christ who died for all men without exception is a Christ who died to save none! Arminians assert Christ made an atonement for all Adam’s fallen race, but they are forced to admit the fact that not all Adam’s race are saved by it. Arminians are the ones who really limit the atonement by contending that man must add the finishing touch to the work of Christ or be lost forever in Hell. They have an atonement which does not atone, a redemption which does not redeem, a Saviour who fails to save, and a Reconciliator who fails to reconcile. The Arminian holds that the death of Christ made

salvation objectively possible for all, but that it did not actually save so much as one soul unless man joins his faith unto it. He makes man’s faith to do more than the death of Christ did.

## GOD’S LOVE DESTROYED

The universal atonement reflects upon God’s love. I know that they deny this charge and affirm that their theory magnified God’s love by extending it to all mankind. But a careful examination of their system of teaching reveals that they reduce God’s love to nothing. They say God loved men at one time and gave His Son to die for them and willed that they all be saved. Afterwards they say this love is turned to hate and that God punishes these same people

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in Hell whom He in times past loved. If this be so, where is God's immutable and unalterable love of which the Bible speaks (John 13:1)? Such love is unworthy of God Who changes not.

## AN UNWISE GOD

Universal atonement reflects upon God's wisdom. What wisdom is demonstrated in sending Christ to die for a multitude who perish in their sins? But they will answer that these perish because they do not meet God's conditions of salvation. But did God not know about this rejection of theirs? If He knew, then what wisdom was in providing a blessing He knew they would not receive? How can He be an all-wise God (Jude 25)?

## A POWERLESS GOD

A general atonement reflects upon God's power. Arminians say it is God's will that every man be saved by Christ's death. Since some are not saved it must be because God lacks the power to save them. This destroys the omnipotence of God and makes man mightier than his Maker! But this can never be said of a God with Whom nothing is impossible (Luke 1:37) or too hard (Jer. 32:17).

## A CHANGEABLE GOD

The Arminian atonement reflects upon God's immutability. At one time God is in a mind to save people, yet at the judgment He is in mind to destroy them in Hell-fire. But the Bible says: **"He is in one mind, and who can turn him?"** (Job 23:13).

## ROBS GOD OF HIS GLORY

Universal atonement robs God of His glory. The chief end of Christ's redemption was God's glory. But if some men redeemed by Christ are not saved, then God is deprived of His glory. But God

will not give His glory to another. The Bible says: **"His glory is great in thy salvation"** (Ps. 21:5).

## CHRIST'S DEATH VAIN

The theory that Christ died for all men cheapens the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. If Christ died to save all men, and some are not saved, then Christ's death was a failure and His blood fuel for the flames of Hell. Yet Isaiah said of Christ: **"He shall not fail"** (Isa. 42:4). If some go to Hell for whom Christ died, then Christ did not obtain eternal redemption as the Bible says in Hebrews 9:12. Then the Bible is in error when it says of Christ: **"His work is perfect"** (Deut. 32:4). Then Christ's death offers no security from condemnation.

## AN UNSATISFIED GOD

It was the joy set before Christ to know that all for whom He suffered would be with Him in glory. Isaiah 53:10 says: **"...he shall see his seed."** Verse 11 says: **"He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."** Arminians have Christ dying for some who will go to Hell. What a disappointment this must be to Him to see some of His seed for whom He died howling in the fires of Hell!

## DENIES THE SCRIPTURES

The Bible speaks of some irremissible sins. Mark 3:29 says: **"But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but it is in danger of eternal damnation."** I John 5:16 reads: **"There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it."** Christ did not die for these sins which cannot be forgiven, yet Arminians say in the face of these Scriptures that Christ died for all the sins of all mankind.

## SERVERSIVE TO GOOD WORKS

Those who believe in a universal

atonement have no foundation for good works of which they speak so freely. Their scheme leaves the believer without any cause to love Christ and to praise Him for salvation. They make the difference between the saved and unsaved to be the will and works of the saved, not the death of Jesus Christ. This leaves those saved to glory in their will, word, worthiness, and works, for Christ did no more for them than the damned in Hell. Therefore they are in no way obligated to serve Christ since their faith and works have done more for them than even the death of Christ did. They have no cause to be thankful to God for what Christ has done, for they were saved by what they did themselves.

## DISCOURAGES FAITH

If men may be redeemed by Christ and eternally perish, then why trust Him for salvation? I dare not trust my soul to a Saviour who is unable to save those for whom He died. If Christ died for the damned in Hell, what guarantee would be left me that I should not go there? Could I recommend such a weak Saviour to a Hell-deserving sinner?

Praise God! I have a Saviour who saves all for whom He died. No condemnation can be laid to the charge of any of God's elect for whom Christ suffered and died. His **"hand is not shortened, that it cannot save"** (Isa. 59:1).

Someone may say, "I am a sinner. Will Christ save me?" Certainly, for **"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"** (I Tim. 1:15). **"While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"** (Rom. 5:8).

Another says, "You believe Christ died for just a few. I want no such redemption. I prefer to continue in my sins." Then you have no complaint against Christ

who did not offer you what you would have rejected if offered. Your doom is on your own head!



## The Short Pews



Brief Articles  
by Curtis Pugh  
(1944 - 2018)

### ARE THERE MANY SAVED?

**"Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved..."** (Luke 13:23)? This was an honest question put to Jesus by one who was observing the reaction of the people to His ministry. The Lord replied in these words: **"Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are"** (Luke 13:24-25).

There comes a time when the Master of this world will close the door of opportunity to enter into salvation, but as Jesus said, **"many... shall not be able."** The Lord's answer to those outside will be you are not from me! You are not mine!

The answer to our question is given by the Lord in these words: **"many... will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."** In other words the "many" shall be lost! Few, then, will be saved! Consider this: the Lord Jesus who was and is the Son of God lived thirty three and a half years upon this

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# The Short Pews

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earth. He went about doing good, raising the dead, healing the sick, preaching repentance, teaching wholesome, healthy doctrine, etc., and through His disciples baptizing converts. Before He left this world He promised His disciples that He would dip them in the Holy Spirit in a few days (see Acts 1:4-5). How many disciples were gathered together for that event? The answer is only a hundred and twenty! Think about that! The Son of God left behind a hundred-twenty disciples – faithful men and women who obeyed Him. Others were converted later, but after thirty three and a half years He left only a few faithful disciples out of the multiplied thousands He preached to and before whom He worked undisputed miracles.

How shall we assess the worth of today's huge churches as far as true converts are concerned? Looking at things outwardly it would seem that Jesus was a failure, especially in comparison to today's popular preachers. Ah! But the difference is in quality! His converts were said by their contemporaries to **"have turned the world upside down"**! (see Acts 17:6). But today's converts for the most part have had the world turn them upside down! By and large today's "Christians" are so different from those converted by Christ as to be a different species.

We are reminded of the Lord's words: **"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from**

**me, ye that work iniquity"** (Matt. 7:22-23).

## FREEDOM OF CHOICE

Those who have a high opinion of man and a low opinion of God find it necessary in their scheme of things to defend God by trying to make Him fit their ideas of fairness. They claim that God must give every individual a choice as to whether to be saved or not. Otherwise they think God is not fair. But the plain fact is that not every person has a choice. Not every person has heard the Gospel. There are tribes and nations in the world where the Gospel has not been preached: where Jesus has not been set forth as the Savior. Those born 600 years ago in this country did not have the opportunity to make a choice for Jesus for they never heard of Him, for instance.

God gave three lights to humankind: conscience, nature and the Bible. Mankind has seared his conscience (I Tim. 4:2). Paul makes it clear that only God's existence and power is made known by nature (Romans 1:20), but this only makes man without excuse and tells him nothing of the Savior. So how is it that all men have a choice whether to be saved or not when most people down throughout time have not even heard of the Lord Jesus?

There is another problem with this theory of men having a free choice regarding salvation. This problem is the depravity of the human heart. **"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it"** (Jer. 17:9)? Because we humans when left to ourselves choose according to our hearts, we will not choose Christ. In fact, we cannot choose salvation, for we cannot come to Christ on our own. Jesus said, **"No man can come to me, except the Father which**

**hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day"** (John 6:44). That verse is hated by the free choice crowd because it is obvious that God does not draw all men to Christ: that goes contrary to their high ideas of humankind and their theory of man's free choices.

Here is what God thinks about humankind: **"Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance..."** (Isa. 40:15). The water that drips off the outside of a bucket and the "small dust" on a set of scales are of no consequence. So God views humanity! In comparison with Him we all are as nothing! Only those who think more highly than they ought to think have a problem with God being the Potter and humanity being the clay. **"Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour"** (Rom. 9:21)? It is God who has done the choosing as to whom He will save. Sinners must fall upon their unworthy faces being totally dependent upon God for salvation. But human pride hardens them against God. Repent!

## FOUR KINDS OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

Several factors may exist that have given rise to the four types of church government: tradition, expediency, misunderstanding etc. In such a brief space we can only examine each briefly and give at least one passage of Scripture for or against each one.

First of all there is a form of church government which is basically a monarchy: the rule of one man over a church. Regardless of the titles given, in essence such a man rules as a king over a church (or churches). The

Bible speaks against this system in 3 John 1:9-10 as follows: **"I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church."** This man, Diotrephes, took unto himself authority over the congregation when he had no right to do so. He wanted first place and did what he could to obtain and maintain it to the detriment of the church and the work of missions.

The second form of church government is an oligarchy: government by a few. Whether called "ruling elders," "elder board," or "deacon board" or some "committee" or whatever, whenever a few hold authority over the membership (this few often choosing their own successors and fellows) this is an oligarchy. Peter wrote against this when he said: **"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock"** (I Peter 5:2-3). Peter was addressing the elders (ordained preachers) among the congregation. He warned against an oligarchy saying they were not to be **"lords over God's heritage"** - the few ruling over the many. Whenever a church has "ruling elders" or a governing "deacon board" such a thing constitutes **"lords over God's heritage."**

The third form of church

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# The Short Pews

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government is anarchy: absence of active government or proper authority. Whenever the membership rules without being submitted to Christ as Head over the church this is anarchy. Often such churches appropriate to themselves authority beyond that given by Christ to His churches. Besides Christ-given executive authority (the right to carry out Christ's instructions) they take unto themselves a fuller judicial authority than He gave and then proceed to usurp His authority by taking it upon themselves legislative authority which is rightfully Christ's. Colossians 1:18 says: **"And he [Christ] is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence"** [brackets added]. Christ left to His churches executive authority: the authority to carry out His commands. He left to His churches limited judicial authority in the matter of church discipline, but even then there are rules to be followed. But He gave His church no legislative authority. No church has a right to make rules or issue commandments: Christ is the Head and Law-giver and He alone.

The church of the Laodiceans was in terrible spiritual condition as recorded in Revelation chapter three. The two Greek words that make up the name of this city are "laos" and "dike." "Laos" (from whence "laity") means the people while "dike" means "right" or even "lawsuit" and has been taken by some to mean the rulership of the people. If that is accurate then the result of the

rule of the people apart from obedience to Christ is seen as a part of their desperate spiritual condition. Christ was outside! Is this not the case whenever a congregation refuses to submit to His authority and in effect throws Him out?

The fourth kind of church government is democracy under Christ: an equal brotherhood of all members subject to and seeking to obey Christ in all corporate decisions and actions as well as in their personal lives. Ephesians 5:23 says: **"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body."** A husband is not the organic head of the woman for she has her own head. So each church may have an organic "head" for some members are likened to an "ear," and "eye" and a nose ("smelling") in 1 Corinthians 12:16-17. (We can hardly think of an "eye" or an "ear" or "smelling" existing apart from a head). The organic head of a church, it seems to me, ought to be the spiritual leader, "elder," or pastor of the flock: the one with the responsibility of feeding that flock. The one who must give an answer to Christ. Such men are to be obeyed in their teaching and preaching of the Word of God. **"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you"** (Heb. 13:17). But such an organic head is not "the Head" or King or Governor over the church. That governmental head is to be Christ!

We find in the New Testament that the choice of "diakonos" (deacons) was evidently by

voting unless we are willing to ascribe disorderly mob rule to the Jerusalem ecclesia. We read the apostles' solution in the following passage: **"Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them"** (Acts 6:3-6). No lesser men than the apostles did not take it upon themselves to choose men for the office of deacon. The congregation was instructed with the words **"look ye out among you"** and they did that. The congregation "chose" or elected men in an orderly manner we can be sure. How else could it be known that "the saying [words of the apostles] pleased the multitude"? These chosen men were brought before the apostles and they, based upon the choice of the congregation, appointed them as deacons or servants to the church. Is this not democracy under the Headship of Christ?

A careful examination of Acts 1:15-26 also shows the democracy under Christ of the first congregation. Peter sets forth the qualifications necessary for one who was to replace Judas as an apostle. His Christian experience had to begin with John's baptism and he had to have kept company from that time with the apostles. Understanding

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## BEREA BAPTIST BANNER Financial Report 4-1-2021 to 4-30-2021

Beginning Balance .....	\$1,033.03
<b>RECEIPTS:</b>	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS .....	300.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL .....	60.00
Bethel B. C., Pasadena, TX .....	50.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne, WV .....	200.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY .....	150.00
Carol Willett, Cottonwood Shores, TX ....	100.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL .....	25.00
Donald Parker, Millport, AL .....	100.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY .....	100.00
Grace B. C., Gladwin, MI .....	50.00
Grace B. C., Rural Hall, NC .....	50.00
Grace Missionary B. C., Tulsa, OK .....	50.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV .....	100.00
James R. Blaney, Bethesda, OH .....	200.00
The Lord's B. C., Goose Creek, SC .....	50.00
Mike Sherman, Ashland, KY .....	70.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Cheapeake, OH .....	100.00
New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN .....	100.00
Parkway Landmark B. C., Springfield, OR .....	200.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL .....	100.00
Portland B. C., Plumerville, AR .....	50.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Silsbee, TX .....	30.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Wellington, KS ....	100.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA .....	25.00
Subscriptions .....	56.00
Anonymous .....	1,220.00
Dividing checks .....	150.00
Sub Total .....	\$2,507.50
<b>TOTAL .....</b>	<b>\$4,601.73</b>
<b>EXPENDITURES:</b>	
Printing .....	574.85
Postage .....	507.15
Wages .....	2,300.00
FICA .....	175.90
Dividing checks .....	150.00
Bank charge .....	13.00
Total Expenditures .....	\$3,720.90
<b>ENDING BALANCE .....</b>	<b>\$1,098.13</b>



## BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST Financial Report 4-1-2021 to 4-30-2021

Beginning Balance .....	\$3,370.78
<b>RECEIPTS:</b>	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS .....	225.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY .....	100.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY .....	100.00
.....	425.00
<b>TOTAL .....</b>	<b>3,795.78</b>
<b>EXPENDITURES:</b>	
Radio time .....	363.98
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES .....</b>	<b>363.98</b>
.....	3,431.80
Interest .....	+0.03
<b>ENDING BALANCE .....</b>	<b>\$3,431.83</b>



# The Short Pews

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that the phrase “gave forth their lots” (v. 26) is different than the casting of lots portrays for us the choice (election) of Mathias by the “disciples” whom Peter addressed and who are said to number about one hundred and twenty (see vs. 15-16). (The word “men” in the phrase “men and brethren” (v. 16) was “used generically generically of a group of both men and women”).

As previously shown, democracy apart from the Headship of Christ is anarchy. But the careful and responsible choices and determinations made by men and women – members of the ecclesia - who are living in obedience to Christ is that which characterized the first congregation in Jerusalem. And it seems clear that this ought to be the kind of church government in the Lord’s churches.

This kind of church government does not hinder the spiritual leaders from exercising the gifts God has given. It does not take anything away from the rightful authority and leadership of the pastor. It does not imperil the God-given liberty of the saints, but rather provides order in the house of God.

One disadvantage to this kind of democratic church government under Christ is its relative inefficiency time wise. It requires time for prayerful consideration and even fasting if we follow the example of the Jerusalem congregation. An absolute monarchy is the most efficient form of church government as far as speed or time is concerned. One man can make up his mind much faster than a congregation – especially an ecclesia seeking the mind



of God on a matter. So also is an oligarchy a faster moving decision making body and an anarchy (which is a kind of mob rule) is likewise faster than the prayerful contemplation of the Scriptures as our guide for obedience to Christ our Head. But it is the slower form (the obedience of the congregation as to what Christ would have the church do or not do) that God has set in His churches.

After all, the most efficient of government is that of a despot. The problem with despotism (monarchy) today is sin. A truly beneficent monarch cannot be found: one whose only thought

is the welfare of his people. But there is One coming who shall reign as the Beneficent Despot: the King of Kings who not only has the good of His people constantly in mind, but who also has the power to carry out all He deems good and proper. And He, the Lord Jesus Christ, is now the only Head and Law-giver over His churches. After all, they are His! And as the potter has power over the clay, Christ has the right to do with each of His churches as He sees fit. The job of each ecclesia is to do what her Head says do!



# ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Grace Landmark Baptist Church of Buckhannon, WV, is seeking a pastor. The church is Sovereign Grace and Landmark in doctrine and practice. Any interested called pastor of like faith may contact Brother Brad Butcher at (304) 669-4738 or (304) 745-6226.

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The Stephens Branch Baptist Church of Martin, Kentucky is in need of a pastor. They are an Independent, Sovereign Grace, Landmark, Missionary Baptist church holding to the doctrines of grace and the King James Bible. If you are interested in being considered or would like more information on the church you can call Brother Lonnie Edwards at (859) 629-1413 or write the church at: Stephens Branch Baptist Church, 1025 Stephens Branch Road, Martin, Kentucky 41649.

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The Lord’s Baptist Church in Tacoma Washington is in need of a pastor. For more information please contact Gaylen Russell at 360-879-5565 (home) or 253-495-4567 (cell) or by Email: [gaylenr@rainierconnect.com](mailto:gaylenr@rainierconnect.com).

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The Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Caldwell, KS is in need of a pastor. For more information please contact the church in writing at SGBC, 400 N. Main St., Caldwell, KS 67022, or by phone Brother Darin Wiley 620-863-2431.

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The Victory Baptist Church of Chehalis, Washington is in need of a pastor. Any interested brother may call Gerry Greisen at (360) 985-7975, or Mark Fenison at (360) 751-2929.

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