

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

Hear and Do It

By Paul Stepp
of Indore, West Virginia

"Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all



thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deut. 6:3-5).

The Word of God is important, because the One Who gave us the Word is God. This passage reminds us that we should hear what the Lord has to say, because He is the one true God. This

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The Only Saving Name

By Milburn R. Cockrell
(1941 – 2002)

The Only Way of Salvation
"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Simon Peter had been summoned by the leader of



his nation to answer for healing a lame man. While explaining the case of temporal salvation Peter passed from the subject of bodily

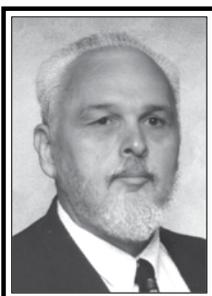
healing to soul healing. The lame

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Christ Not the Founder of Christianity

By Curtis Pugh
of Poteau, Oklahoma

The definition of Christianity as given by the Merriam Webster dictionary is this: "the religion derived from Jesus Christ, based on the Bible as sacred scripture, and professed by Eastern, Roman Catholic, and Protestant bodies." "Christendom" is given as a synonym for the word "Christianity" by that same dictionary. Notice in that



definition that Jesus Christ is not said to have founded Christianity! The dictionary says "derived from Jesus Christ." The

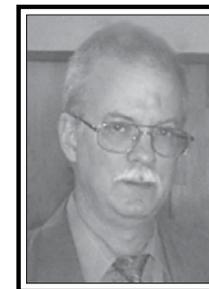
fact is that Jesus Christ never founded such a thing. This we shall show. Today's Christianity or Christendom is a monstrosity

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Why Did He Say That?

By Lucien J. LeSage Jr.
of Pride, Louisiana

"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me" (Matt. 27:46)? Why did Jesus say this on the cross?



The word "forsaken" according to the Greek dictionary means to leave behind or abandon. So was our Lord

confused? Was He wrong about

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Faith in Circumstantial Evidence

By Matthew Stepp
of Wayne, West Virginia

I woke up one morning during a vacation in an Atlantic Coast state. As I wandered in the devastated coastline countryside, I ran into a local farmer that was looking pretty devastated himself. "Looks like a hurricane went through here!" I commented. "How'd that happen?"

The man ran his hand through



his scanty hairline and gave me a queer look. "You mean you didn't see what happened?" As I shook my head and answered

"No," he put his hands on his hips and proceeded to answer me.

"Yeah, it looks like a hurricane,

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The purpose of the *Berea Baptist Banner* is as follows:

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 strength-en His churches in the most holy faith.
5. To motivate God's children to a closer fellow-ship 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.

Hear and Do It

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passage reminds us that we should obey and do what the Lord tells us in His Word, because we owe Him all that we have, and all that we hope to be.

Too often, the world of religion bases its beliefs and its teachings on the words of men, or on the efforts or the works of men. These men may be noble men, as far as men may go. These men may be eloquent men, as far as men may go. These men may be even good examples and good teachers unto others, at least in morality and human righteousness. But, these men, no matter how highly esteemed they may be, cannot give us words or examples that are worthy to be compared to the words of God, which are found in the Holy Scriptures.

I want to remind us to hear the Word of God, hear His Word as it was meant to be heard with reverential ears and obedient hearts. I want to remind us that the Word of God comes forth from One Who is higher and better than any man could ever hope to attain, and this Word of God even comes forth from the very God Who has made us and preserved us. The Word of God is high, it is of utmost importance, and it is glorious. Does this heavenly Word of God not deserve to be heard by us, who are mere mortal men? Does this heavenly Word of God not deserve to be revered and obeyed by us, who are the men and women who have been made by God, and set up in our places, and preserved and protected by God?

**THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD
AND ONE WORD**

This passage reminds the Israelites, and us, that there is only one God and one Word of God.

The Word is "of God," in that the Word comes forth "from God." The Word is also "of God," in that the Word tells us "about God." **"Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the LORD he is God; there is none else beside him. Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee: and upon earth he shewed thee his great fire; and thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire"** (Deut. 4:35-36). There are not many ways which are true, and many words which are true, just as there are not many gods who are true. There is only one God and one true Word. There can only be one "right" and one "true" word.

The world is full of various ways, words, beliefs and doctrines of men. These ways must be false, and these ways must be the ways of unrighteousness and death, if they are not the ways and the words of the one true God. Surely, if men have devised many ways to follow, and if men have devised many words which they imagine to be true; these must all be false, if they are not in accord and in agreement with the words and the ways which God has delivered unto men. **"Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you. Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you"** (Deut. 4:1-2).

It is the inherent responsibility of mortal men, to acknowledge God as our God, and His Word

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PO Box 39
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as the true Word. There can be no compromise in this. God will hold all men accountable, as to whether or not men will acknowledge God's deity, and His Word. As human beings, we must acknowledge that there is only one God Who is the Creator. This Creator has made us, and we therefore must proclaim Him as God, and we must elevate His Word and His teachings above those of mere mortal men.

Further, there is only one God Who is the redeemer of men. **"I am the LORD your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that ye should not be their bondmen; and I have broken the bands of your yoke, and made you go upright"** (Lev. 26:13). This God is the Saviour of men. Should not men have such a God in high esteem? Should not men submit to the Word of such a God? After all, if there is redemption, salvation, or rescue, God must be the doer of it. Therefore, should not we highly esteem Him and His Word?

In the Scriptures we are reminded that there is only one God Who has spoken from Heaven. **"See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, 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"** (Heb. 12:25-29). Such a God is an awesome God. Such a God, Who judged the Israelites when they disobeyed Him and lightly esteemed Him, will also be the judge of our generation, if we fail to ascribe to Him all authority, and ascribe to His Word all glory and truth. Our God does not give us many "words" or various and conflicting teachings. Rather, our God gives us "The Word" – in the New Testament we find that Jesus Christ is the incarnation of the "Word of God." **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men"** (John 1:1-4).

This is the one God and the one Word which is able to teach, save, and provide for the sons and daughters of men. **"See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy. Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants,**

Little Hills

By Nathaniel Hille of
Plant City, Florida



The New Birth #11 Evidences of Having Been Born Again—Part 4

Another evidence of spiritual life is Spiritual Growth: I Peter 2:2, **"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, THAT YE MAY GROW THEREBY"** (Emp. NH). Just as babies grow, or mature, into children, then adolescents, then adults—so too must the new-born babe in Christ. If a child were not growing, we would conclude that there is something wrong! Such is the case with a person who claims to be saved, but has NOT grown spiritually. The born-again child of God hungers, desires, longs for the Word of God that they may **"grow in grace, and in knowledge of our Lord and**

Savior Jesus Christ" (II Peter 3:18). This growth is a maturity of the child of God in spiritual things; not a head knowledge of what the Bible says. Growth is the child of God maturing from a babe-in-Christ into a full-grown adult that is capable of following in the footsteps of Christ Jesus. Paul admonished the Corinthian church to come out of their infancy and to be as men, **"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong"** (I Cor. 16:13). For those who profess to be born-again, have you grown since the Lord birthed you from above? Have you matured spiritually, after the likeness of the Lord Jesus? Have you put off sin in any way? And put on Christ? If not, you may not be saved at all!

and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people" (Deut. 32:39-43). Such a God is always in control, and His will shall be accomplished. Such a God delivers a Word that is invincible, and always accomplishing what is His pleasure.

HEAR AND OBEY THE WORD OF GOD

Since we have identified God as the one God, and His Word as the one Word; does not it behoove us to hear and believe this Word? Is there a better or higher god to be found anywhere? Is there a better or fuller revelation of God to be found elsewhere? Surely, our God is worthy of our attention and affection. Surely our God's Word is worthy that we should hear and

obey It. If we give our affections and our devotions to another god, or another word, will we be able to please our God?

The Scriptures reveal to us that our God and His Word is the voice from Heaven that we should listen to. **"And the LORD said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven"** (Exo. 20:22). We should hear and obey such heavenly words. We should hear and obey a Word which originates in Heaven itself. We should take this Word to heart. This Word should be very important to us. It comes to us from Heaven itself.

This Heavenly Word, which is the Word of God, is the only Word

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in which we should believe. This is the Word in which we should put our trust. **“But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him”** (Isa. 43:1-7). The Word of God reveals to us a Saviour Who is aware of our every condition, and is able to succor and give us strength at all times, and in every situation. The Word of God reveals a Saviour who has determined to save a people, and who has determined to preserve a people, even at the expense of the lives of men and nations.

This is the Word of God upon which we should stake the salvation of our souls. **“Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that**

by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:10-12). There is only one God, and there is only one Saviour of men. The Word of God—the true, unadulterated, Word of God—reveals to us a gracious, a kind, a loving, a just, and a holy Saviour. We place our trust in Him. We hear, and we obey His words. We hear, and we trust His teachings. We hear, and we love to learn of Him and of His ways.

This is the Word which should rule our lives, and be the pattern for our worship of the one true God. **“Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant: And gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and promisedst them that they should go in to possess the land which thou hadst sworn to give them. But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments, And refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their**

rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not” (Neh. 9:13-17). He gives us good things. He gives us instruction. He gives us leadership. He reveals to us His mercy and the forgiveness of sins. He shows to us, through His Word, the judgment and the righteousness of the thrice holy God. We must hear and obey.

SHARE AND SPEAK THE WORD OF GOD

Since the Word of God is so valuable, and since devotion unto and adherence unto the Word of the one true God is so necessary; should not we speak and share this precious Word with others? This God and His Word is the only hope of life in the world in which we live. **“And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; Then beware lest thou forget**

the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage” (Deut. 6:6-12). The importance of this Word in our lives, should be evident to those around us. Fellow saints should hear us talking about the Word of God. The lost sinner should hear us proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Why are we so careful, and so negligent, to share the one true God and His Word with the world? This Word is our only hope, and this Word is the world's only hope. We should talk of the Word of God no matter what our condition is, even as Moses commands, whether we are sitting down, walking by the way, or lying down for the night, we should always be ready to speak and proclaim the blessed Word of God. Let us be faithful to share with others, what is so important to us.

Why is it, that even many Christians are hesitant to discuss or speak of the Word of God? Do we not find great personal pleasure in the reading and study of God's Word? Why should it be any different when we are in the presence of our fellow-saints? And yet, many times, Christians will spend their time fellowshiping in some other area of life, and hardly ever mention the name of Christ, or the Word of God. If we can not enjoy speaking and sharing the Word of God amongst ourselves, what hope do we have, in sharing the Gospel of Christ with the lost?

Sadly, there are many persons, many words, and many things which attract our attention in this life. These distractions will, very often, disrupt our witness and our testimony of God. However, we must know, that there is no one so important as our God and Saviour. Do not let the good

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things (or the bad things) of life separate us from our God. Listen to what Jesus Christ told the two disciples, as He walked with them on the road to Emmaus, after His resurrection. **“Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures”** (Luke 24:25-32)? I love to consider the burning hearts of these two men, as they listened to the Lord Jesus Christ expound the Scriptures. And yet, we ought to have the same burning hearts, as the Spirit of Christ reveals to us the Holy Word of God. O that our hearts would burn within us. O that we should burn to hear the Word of God. O that we should burn to share the Word of God. **“My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue”** (Ps. 39:3).

There is no word so important as the Word of God. Do not forget the Lord or His Word. Do not let the houses, the vineyards, and the olive trees mentioned in the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy distract us from our God and His Word. Instead, whether in good times or bad, let us share and speak of the Word of God. Notice what Jeremiah said, **“Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay”** (Jer. 20:9). We must not be ashamed of a God so great! We must not be ashamed of a Word so glorious! **“I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee. I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name”** (Ps. 138:1-2).



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Twelve Excellent Rules

For promoting harmony among church members, as follows:

1. To hear with, and not magnify each other's failings and infirmities, remembering that we are all subject to them, Gal. 6:1-2.
2. To seek occasions for social prayer, and religious conference with each other, Matt. 18:20; I Thess. 5:17; Heb. 10:25.
3. To pray one for another in our social meetings, and particularly in private, not omitting to pray

for our pastor, James 5:16; Rom. 15:30; I Thess. 5:25; II Thess. 3:1.

4. To avoid going from house to house, for the purpose of hearing news and interfering with other people's business, Prov. 26:20.

5. Always to turn a deaf ear to any slanderous report, and to lay no charge brought against any person until well founded, Lev. 19:16; Prov. 10:18.

6. If a member be in fault, to tell him of it in private, before it is mentioned to others, Matt. 18:15; James 5:19-20.

7. To watch against a shyness of each other, and put the best construction on any action that has the appearance of opposition or resentment. Also, to avoid a spirit of envy, Rom. 12:10; Phil. 2:3; I Cor. 13:4.

8. To observe the just rule of Solomon, that is, to leave off contention before it is meddled with, Prov. 17:14; 20:3.

9. If a member has offended, to consider how glorious, how godlike it is to forgive, and how unlike a Christian it is to revenge, Prov. 19:11; Eph. 4:2.

10. To remember that it is always a grand artifice of the devil, to promote distance and animosity among members of churches; and we should therefore watch against everything that furthers his end, James 3:13-18.

11. To consider how much more good we can do in the world at large, and in the church in particular, when we are all united in love, than we should do when acting alone and indulging a contrary spirit, II Peter 1:5-8.

12. Lastly, to consider the express injunction of Scripture, and the beautiful example of Christ, as to these important things, Eph. 4:32; I Peter 2:21; John 13:5, 35.

(The Baptist, Vol. I, No. 2 August 31, 1844)



Christ Not the

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whose founder is the devil aided by wicked men: mere religionists. It is obvious, by the way, that there is no unity within today's Christianity. Men try to form unions in order to achieve power in the world, but their differing doctrines and practices keep them from any real unity.

What did Jesus Christ do while He was upon this earth? Most certainly He **“..went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil”** (Acts 10:38). He interacted with people of all sorts, teaching some, rebuking others, etc. He was aggressive in taking the initiative in speaking the truth to those with whom He came in contact. While many men have founded religions in various places around the world, Christ never founded a religion. That He did so is taught by many and often assumed to be the case when He is compared with the founders of the world's religions. For instance we often hear that Mohamed the founder of Islam is dead, but Christ is alive thus insinuating that the two were both founders of a religion. But Christ did not found “Christendom” or the many-headed monster that is today called “Christianity.” Instead He built a congregation, prepared her, and commissioned (gave authority to) her to replicate herself throughout the world after He returned to His Father. Jesus stated His intention saying, **“..I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”** (Matt. 16:18). By this He meant that He would finish what He had started in building His congregation.

The Greek word “ecclesia,”

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or “ekklesia” which means congregation, was translated by the King James translators as “church,” but they admitted in their introductory remarks “To The Reader” that they had kept the old ecclesiastical words – the words used by their Catholic mother. They admitted that they were not so scrupulous as others (Tyndale, for instance) and specifically stated that they did not use the word “congregation,” substituting in its place the word “church” which means “Lord’s” or “of the Lord.” The English word “church” comes from a completely different Greek word, “kyriakos,” which is not related to “ekklesia” at all. By following tradition on this and other words (such as “baptizo”) and because most people have not and will not read the translators’ introductory material, much confusion exists in the religious world. The point being this: Jesus said He would build His congregation: not a religions organization made up of more than one congregation, nor did He say He was starting a new religion.

Jesus did not say that He would start to build His congregation and leave it to be completed by someone else. Neither did He say that He would build His congregation on the Day of Pentecost through the Holy Spirit after He Himself was absent from the world. He said He would build it! The Greek word for “build” is “oikodomeo.” This word means to complete a building or a house. This word is used thirty-eight times in the New Testament. When it is used as a verb as in the words of Christ concerning building His congregation, it always means to complete a

building, except in Luke 14:30 where it is expressly specified, “.. **This man began to build, and was not able to finish.**” Any thinking person will agree that such a qualifying statement does not alter the meaning of the word “build” in any way. And so Christ built His congregation. So then, we are in step with many old Baptists and more importantly in step with the New Testament when we say, “Any church that is newer than Christ and His apostles is too new for me.”

Many have argued that Christ’s congregation was not founded until the Jewish feast day of Pentecost after the Lord ascended to Heaven. Their argument sometimes is that His disciples lacked the Holy Spirit until that day and so were not His church. But that is not true. They lacked the visible evidence of the power of the Holy Spirit, for they had not yet been dipped into Him by Christ as He promised in Acts 1:5. But they had the Holy Spirit, for we read in John 20:21-22 these words: **“Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.”** The plain fact is this: there is not a single verse or even a hint in the Bible that the Holy Ghost would build a congregation on that Pentecost! Most Protestants and the cults generally claim that they trace their origin back to the Day of Pentecost following the Lord’s ascension to Heaven. Too late! Christ left His congregation on earth to do His work – it was already here when Pentecost rolled around! Again we say: “Any church that is newer than Christ and His apostles is too new for me.”

The men and women who congregated with Christ, His baptized followers, were His congregation and His bride. Is it not simple logic to say that people who congregate in an organized way are a congregation? And Christ’s congregation was organized having officers: a pastor (Christ their Shepherd) and a treasurer (Judas) and thus were organized sufficient for their needs. They did evangelistic work. Their pastor taught them and defended the truth against false teachers. That they traveled about and had no meeting house of their own did not affect their being a congregation for since that time there have been Baptist congregations who have crossed the Atlantic, moved westward from the Eastern Seaboard, etc., all as organized congregations. Their moving about did not affect their status as one of Christ’s congregations one whit! That they were Christ’s bride was made clear by John the Baptist when he spoke of Christ, identifying Him by His bride, saying, **“He that hath the bride is the bridegroom...”** (John 3:29).

Buildings are constructed of materials prepared for the builder’s use either by him or by others. Trees are turned into lumber, clay into bricks, steel into nails, etc., etc. In the case of the first of the Lord’s congregations the material was prepared by John the Baptist. He came preaching repentance as the Lord’s forerunner preparing the way for Christ. Those who repented and looked forward in faith to the Messiah (Christ) – these John baptized. Thus the prophecy concerning John the Baptist was fulfilled: he shall **“.. make ready a people prepared for the Lord”** (Luke 1:17).

Modern Christianity has long been divided over John’s

baptism. Some say that John’s baptism is not Christian baptism. If we take the word Christian to mean “the religion derived from Jesus Christ, based on the Bible as sacred Scripture, and professed by Eastern, Roman Catholic, and Protestant bodies” as the dictionary gives, there is no such thing as Christian baptism. Different ideas about modes, administrators, motives and candidates prove that various “Christian” groups have no single baptism. Many within Christianity think baptism to be a sacrament while others hold it to be an ordinance. There is a vast difference between those two things. Basically an ordinance requires obedience. A sacrament conveys saving grace in some measure. Scriptural baptism is a congregational ordinance to be administered on the authority of Christ as delegated to His congregation in what we often call the great commission. If baptism were a Christian ordinance then everyone who identifies as a Christian according to the dictionary definition would be qualified to administer baptism. And indeed some people think that is the case. Thus not only men who profess faith in Christ, but also women and children would be eligible to baptize.

But Christ’s specific command to a specific body (His church or His congregation) forbids anyone else from administering baptism. Scripturally this is evident. And logically, and in the rulings of law courts, that principle is true. In law the Latin expression “expressio unius est exclusio alterius,” is defined as being “a maxim of interpretation meaning that the specification of one thing is the exclusion of all others.” Take the words of Jesus

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to His congregation in what is called the great commission to any just court and the ruling will be that because He gave specific commands to a specific body, His congregation, all other groups or organizations or individuals are excluded from having His authority to act on His behalf in that three-fold authorization. So then only His congregation or one(s) deriving their authority from His congregation can rightfully administer baptism! That is, of course, unless a johnny-come-lately congregation can prove that they have direct authority from Christ to initiate acting on His behalf, but as they cannot prove that the words of Christ in His commission were addressed to them they are without authority.

As has often been pointed out, John's baptism was the only baptism had by Christ or His apostles – His first congregation. Christ set the apostles first in His congregation (See I Corinthians 12:28). And when it came time to elect a successor to the fallen Judas the requirements are clearly given: **“Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection”** (Acts 1:21-22). A qualified candidate for the apostleship must have been in company with them **“Beginning from the baptism of John.”** The ministry of Jesus – His building of His congregation began immediately after His baptism which was administered by John the Baptist. This John was

a man sent from God (John 1:6) to baptize (John 1:33). That the first members in Jesus' congregation were first disciples of John and therefore had been baptized by him is clear from John 1:35-37 where it is recorded: **“Again the next day after John stood, and two of his [John's] disciples; And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples [of John] heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.”** Others of John's disciples left him to follow Jesus as well.

Just as there is no statement or even a hint that any kind of “church” or congregation was built on the Day of Pentecost, so there is no statement nor hint that someone other than John was sent to initiate a new “Christian baptism.” This is a renegade idea not to be found in God's Word anywhere!

From that first single congregation, by process of succession or replication, has come a host of congregations of like faith and practice down through the centuries to our day. There are now His kind of congregations, commonly called (local) churches, in many parts of the world. Space forbids that we list the marks of such congregations, but Christ's congregations can be known by their preachments and practices. The conclusion to which all are forced by the facts is this: those who claim to be Christians, but who are not faithful members in one of Christ's congregations – one with a valid claim to having descended or having been replicated from the one He built – are outside the very thing that Christ built. They are distinct from that thing which He prepared to do His work, which He left here upon earth to do His work of reproducing herself,

and for whom He is returning. Remember, Christ's words to the congregation at Philadelphia: **“I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth”** (Rev. 3:10).

Those religious entities that make up “Christianity” or Christendom, whatever they may be called, came about as perversions of what Christ left on earth to do His assigned work. They have corrupted ordinances into sacraments, grace into works mongering, liberty into license, the law of love into Judaic legalism, freedom into fear, knowledge into ignorance, faith into superstition, and the gospel into an appeal for a depraved heart to do this or that in order to be saved. Jesus Himself warned of those who would pervert His words and work. He said, **“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves”** (Matt. 7:15). Paul spoke of the same crowd saying, **“For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock”** (Acts 20:29). Old John spoke of those who were outside Christ's congregations in his day saying, **“Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us”** (I John 2:18-19). Christendom has nothing to do with Biblical congregations – Christ's congregations! They went out! Some of them were cast out,

failed to submit themselves to Christ's congregation, refused to repent, and therefore were never restored. They are those who are “without” (outside) the congregation whom God judges (see I Corinthians 5:12-13) while leaving those “within” to be judged by the congregation.

The old Baptists who wrote and subscribed to the First London Baptist Confession had the following to say regarding the relationship between Christ's congregations and His kingdom: **“That Christ has here on earth a spiritual Kingdom, which is the Church, which He has purchased and redeemed to Himself, as a particular inheritance: which Church, as it is visible to us, is a company of visible saints, called and separated from the world, by the Word and the Spirit of God, to the visible profession of the faith of the Gospel, being baptized into the faith, and joined to the Lord, and each other, by mutual agreement, in the practical enjoyment of the ordinances, commanded by Christ their head and King.”**

By their definition and according to the doctrine of other old Baptists we conclude that at one time Christ's kingdom (the visible spiritual phase of it) consisted of one congregation. The visible phase of the kingdom accordingly being co-extensive with Christ's true churches. His kingdom at first was one congregation while later it grew as this congregation replicated herself. But “Christendom” is a perverted form of Christ's kingdom. It is not what Christ built at all! It is an unnatural mustard plant grown into a huge tree in which the filthy fowls of the air that feed on carrion feel right at home, (see Luke 13:18-

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19). It is meal thoroughly leavened with sin, (see Luke 13:21). Jesus spoke of this thing called modern Christianity when He said: **“...The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn”** (Matt. 13:24-30). The worthless tares that make up popular modern Christianity shall suffer the wrath of God which suddenly shall come upon the earth to judge unrighteousness.

In closing let us look at the Biblical norm: that which was the practice of the first congregation. We read in Acts 2:47 these words **“...And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”** Being a member of one of the Lord's congregations is not what saves, but it was the norm in Jerusalem. Those who were saved were joined to or added to the membership of that first body. Are there saved folk today who are outside the Lord's congregations?

Oh! How we hope so! But it was not so in the apostolic age in Jerusalem. Our point is that the Lord's churches or congregations are the result of what Christ left here on earth to do His work: they are the entity with authority to carry out the three-fold great commission. They alone can act in His name, for to act in the name of another – in the stead of another – requires authority from the one for whom the action is done.

This unnatural mustard bush grown into a tall tree which is defined as “the religion derived from Jesus Christ, based on the Bible as sacred Scripture, and professed by Eastern, Roman Catholic, and Protestant bodies” was not what Christ left to do His work, nor did He build it. Christ is not the founder of today's Christianity. He is not the founder of Christendom!



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man had been healed through the name of Jesus Christ. Going from the lower to the higher, Peter declared to them that there was no spiritual salvation out of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

MAN'S GREAT NEED

My text contains that great gospel word **“salvation.”** Because bodily healing is mentioned in the context (Acts 4:9), some insist that verse 12 is only concerned with bodily healing. According to them, Acts 4:12 means that by the invocation of the name of Jesus a miraculous cure for bodily disease can take place. This is a most unworthy interpretation of the word “salvation.” The verb “to be saved” and the noun “salvation” is never in the Greek New Testament applied to the healing of bodily disease. **“Salvation”**

is the technical expression for the whole work Christ is to accomplish for His people. His personal name “Jesus” signifies “savior” or “deliverer.” Matthew 1:21 says: **“...thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.”** The salvation in Acts 4:12 is spiritual and eternal salvation---a salvation from sin and its consequences.

“Salvation” is a very inclusive word. It covers all the redemptive acts from election in eternity passed to glorification in eternity future. So far as our experience is concerned, it involves the deliverance of the soul from sin, the cleansing of the conscience from guilt, and the renewing of a right spirit in man. Spiritual salvation heals the wounds and takes away the disease of sin. It removes the curse of the law for disobedience and puts one's feet upon the Rock Jesus Christ. It puts a new song in his heart and praise in his mouth. It goes on to make his life count for Christ. Eventually, it will restore all he lost in the fall in Adam. Without this salvation in Christ, man is hopeless and helpless.

To most people living in this generation, salvation means no more than deliverance from Hell and admittance into Heaven. But this is not salvation. These two things are the effects of salvation. We are redeemed from Hell because we are saved by Christ, and we enter Heaven because Christ saved us on earth. Salvation does much more than close the gate of Hell and open the gate to Heaven. Real Bible salvation saves us from a wicked, sinful life on earth. It gives us a new nature which makes a great change in the way we walk and talk. Saving grace makes us fear God and keep His commandments. It causes us to treat others as we would like

to be treated. If your salvation experience did not make a great change in your life, then you do not know the grace of God in truth.

MAN CANNOT SAVE HIMSELF

There are only two religions in the world. There is one which makes man his own savior by meritorious deeds which he performs. This religion gives man all the glory for his own salvation. It makes man a worshipper of the works of his own hands. On the other hand, there is another religion which makes Christ man's Savior by His meritorious deeds on the cross. This religion gives all the glory to God for man's salvation. It makes man a worshipper of Christ his Savior. Man by nature prefers the plan of salvation which gives him all the glory and leaves God completely out.

Contrary to much modern thinking, man cannot be his own savior. He “must be saved” by another. Man cannot blot out his own sins which are written in the memory of God. He cannot atone for his own guilt, for it is too great for one **“without strength”** (Rom. 5:6). He cannot change his own heart, for it is incurably wicked (Jer. 17:9). He cannot purchase salvation with his own works because **“by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight”** (Rom. 3:20).

Salvation cannot be obtained by any merit or strength in man. He can destroy himself, but he cannot save himself. On this point the Bible gives no uncertain sound. **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that NOT OF YOURSELVES: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast”** (Eph. 2:8-9) (Emp. MRC). **“NOT BY WORKS**

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OF RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH WE HAVE DONE, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Tit. 3:5) (Emp. MRC). Our faith, our conversion, and our eternal life are not the product of any of our natural abilities. Man must be saved by One outside of himself so that he cannot brag about his salvation.

Spiritual salvation is not of our desire, nor of our desert, but it is of the sovereign, free, distinguishing grace of God. We are saved because God the Father chose us to salvation. We are redeemed because God the Son shed His blood to make an atonement for our sins. We are regenerated by the Holy Spirit Who applies the cleansing blood of Christ to our souls. Only the love and mercy of God keeps us out of Hell. **"Salvation is of the LORD"** (Jon. 2:9). Therefore, all glory belongs to God. To ascribe any part of salvation to the will and work of man is as blasphemous as foolish.

If man could some how save himself, then there was no need for God to choose a people to be saved by Christ (II Thess. 2:13). If self-salvation was possible, then there was no need for Jesus Christ to suffer and die for sinners. If a person could redeem himself unto God, there would be no need for the Holy Spirit to regenerate sinners. If man could be his own savior, then he could walk around on the golden streets of Heaven, boasting that his might and merit brought him to this blissful abode. Man would thus become his own idol and God would be robbed of His glory in man's salvation. This can never be. The Bible says: **"His glory is great in thy salvation"**

(Ps. 21:5).

THERE ARE MANY SAVING NAMES

There are among men many names that pretend to be saving names, but in reality they are physicians of no value. Two thousand years before Christ the Babylonian priests told the citizens of their country that if they would submit to dipping in water they would become regenerate. This Babylonian Mysticism spread over much of the ancient world, and it finally infiltrated the irregular churches after the apostolic age. Baptismal regeneration was the great evil of the Dark Ages. These corrupt churches believed so strongly in the magical power of water that they started baptizing babies in order to save them. As the centuries passed, the Great Whore gave birth to little harlot daughters, but each of these still held that baptism saved or helped to save. Throughout most of Christendom, baptismal regeneration claims to be a saving name, but the Bible says in I Peter 3:21 that baptism does not put away the filth of the flesh which is sin. Water on the outside can never cleanse the soul which is on the inside.

Good works claim to be a saving name. Some practice penance and self denial. They give alms to the poor and say long prayers. They engage in all sorts of community service. They are good to visit the sick and people in prisons. They give huge sums of money to charitable organizations. Some even make long pilgrimages and afflict their bodies. The reason they do all these things is to save their own souls. These people insist on doing something and paying something. Like the Babel builders in Genesis 11, they expect to work their way to Heaven. They

forget that salvation is **"without money and without price"** (Isa. 55:1). The water of life must be taken **"freely"** (Rev. 22:17).

Socialism claims to be a saving name. It caters to the wants of men in material matters by government handouts. The pride of the human intellect is set on the throne, and man becomes his own god. Social progress is put in the place of spiritual change, which alone can produce the fruits of righteousness. Socialists trifle with the awful realities of sin and exalt the material above the spiritual interests of men. Socialism causes men to become so involved in building an earthly paradise that they forget all about the heavenly paradise. History has demonstrated that socialism does not save men from either spiritual or material want. This abominable Christ substitute dishonors the gospel of free grace. Sad to say, but most of the world has gone after this saving name.

The gospel of Arminianism professes to be a saving name. They say if a man will exercise his free will to embrace the simple gospel of easy believism he can by that act put God under obligation to save him. After this great decision there is some need to persevere in holiness, but this is not necessary, seeing one is eternally secure in Christ no matter how he lives. These people have no place for repentance or Holy Spirit conviction. They preach a savior from Hell, but not from sin! Actually, they preach a salvation in sin and not from sin. This is another gospel, and no saving name!

ONLY ONE SAVING NAME

A name stands for a person, and includes whatever rights may belong to him (Acts 3:6, 16). When Peter says in my text there is salvation in no other

name he means there is none can save but Jesus Christ. The names of priests and patriarchs cannot save. The names of ministers and missionaries cannot save. The name of Christians cannot save, for some have a name to live who are in truth dead. The name of the Virgin Mary cannot save. The name of Jesus is the only saving name. It is by His blood and righteousness that men are saved. Christ has no rivals or equals in this work. He has no competition, for He alone can save poor, lost sinners.

The religion of Christ is intolerant when it comes to the way of salvation: **"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."** To those in other religions, it says there is salvation only in Christ. Being a Jew, or Mohammedan, or pagan, or humanist, or evolutionist is not enough. Christianity stands upon its own rights and gives error its just due. All the gods of the heathens and of civilized nations are born of Hell and lead to Hell. The Christian religion is from Heaven, not of men.

Often we hear someone ask, "What about dying infants?" Are they conscious sinners? Do all that die in infancy go to Heaven to be with Jesus?" I do not know that the Bible gives a clear-cut answer to these questions. Some say all dying infants are caught away to dwell in the Third Heaven and to be forever with Christ. Most would say these are regenerated at death or shortly after death. Others would disagree. They would say that only elect infants who die are saved by Christ. I shall not enter into this debate. But I will go far enough to say that no infant is saved apart from

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the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. I have Scripture on this: **“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”**

Still another would inquire, “What about the heathens? They have never heard about Christ. Will any of them be saved without the gospel?” Some would answer these questions by saying that sincere heathens will be saved without the gospel. Others would strongly disagree and say that without the gospel none will be saved. I shall not enter into this controversy either. But I will tell you plainly that there is no salvation for the heathen except through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. No barbarian or baby can enter Heaven without the salvation which is in Christ Jesus!

Religious leaders today want to put something along with Christ for salvation. They will put their own name with Christ’s, or they will put the Virgin Mary and Christ together, or they will put the preacher and Christ, or feelings and Christ. Still others would put the ordinances and Christ, or the mourner’s bench and Christ, or the decision card and Christ, or the church and Christ. But Christ will not share His saving work with any of these. There is salvation only in one name, the name of Jesus. It is so necessary that we stand in living relations of faith and love with Him Whose name is above every name (Phil. 2:9).

The name of Jesus is the only saving name under Heaven or in Heaven. Among the elect angels of Heaven there is found no

saving name. They are friends to the saints. They are our guardians against evil spirits. They take us to Heaven at the time of our death, but they are not our saviors. In Heaven or on earth there is only one saving name. Well did the psalmist ask: **“Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee”** (Ps. 73:25). Who else possesses oneness with the Father, supreme glory, and Divine perfections?

The God of Heaven resolved in His purpose and decree, in His council and covenant, upon the salvation of His people. He appointed his only begotten Son to be their salvation. **“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ”** (I Thess. 5:9). God the Father made no plans to save them some other way. If men are not saved by Christ, they shall die in their sins and suffer eternal torment. Peter was uncompromising on this point in the text, and we must be uncompromising too.

There is salvation in the name of Jesus. There is no higher name than Jesus Christ, the glorified Son of God. There is no abler name than that of Him Who saves to the utter most. No surer name than that of Him Who has been given for that purpose. No sweeter name than that of Him Who is not ashamed to call men brethren. No easier name than that which asks only faith to be exercised in it. Christ is the only saving name, and all who are saved must be saved through His name.

SALVATION ORIGINATED WITH GOD

Notice the words: **“None other name under heaven given.”** The word **“given”** implies that salvation had its origin in God.

A Savior for man was provided by God. The Prophet Isaiah declared: **“. . . unto us a Son is given”** (Isa. 9:6). Again he said: **“I will. . . give thee for a covenant of the people”** (Isa. 49:8). The Savior Himself said: **“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”** (John 3:16).

This is why Christ is called the **“unspeakable gift”** of God in II Corinthians 9:15. Man had no claim on God. He could not compel God to send Christ to die for sinners. The gift might have been withheld, and God’s throne would have been spotless. The selection of Christ to be the Savior, the sending of Him into the world, and all the benefits resulting from His redemptive work, are all an undeserved gift to man. This gift is so unspeakably great that no language can express it, no pen can tell it, and no heart can conceive it. We can only be thankful for the greatness of the gift.

FOR MEN UNDER HEAVEN

Look at the words: **“None other name under heaven given AMONG MEN. . .”** (Emp. MRC). **“Among men”** is not simply “to men,” as the objects of the favor, but among them, with reference to its diffusion. No other means of salvation has been made known and diffused among men by God’s authority. Those who preach salvation in some other person or thing are not sent from God. They are to the lost souls of men as wells without water, clouds without rain, and withered trees, twice dead, plucked up by the roots. They are peddlers of filthy rags (Isa. 64:6); they are **“vain talkers and deceivers”** (Tit. 1:10) **“who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for**

filthy lucre’s sake” (Tit. 1:11).

This salvation by Christ is given among men who stand in need of it. This salvation is given to men who live on earth and under Heaven. There is no salvation to be obtained in Heaven; it must be obtained on earth before a man dies in his sins. The word of this salvation by Christ is sent to men who are ready to perish---to men who can be saved only by the name of Christ---to men who without Christ have no hope. All the prophets preached salvation by the name of Christ: **“To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins”** (Acts 10:43). Christ taught the people no less: **“I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins”** (John 8:24). The Apostle Paul preached the same doctrine: **“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house”** (Acts 16:31).

CONCLUSION

1. My text insists upon the exclusive claims of Christ to be the only Savior of sinners. He, and He only, has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and rose again from the dead to consummate the work of salvation for His people. Salvation is only and entirely by faith in the atoning work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. It is not a question of whether or not there is good in other religions. It is a question of the one divinely appointed way of salvation. Men must be saved by Christ or be everlastingly lost. Any who reject salvation by Christ so do at great peril to their soul. **“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given**

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among men, whereby we must be saved."

3. Christ has saved millions already who are now in Heaven with Him. Millions more now living on earth have been saved by Him. If so many have been saved, why not you? If blood-thirsty Saul could be saved, then there is hope for the chiefest of sinners. Why not be among them that name the name of Christ in order to realize your own salvation by Him?



Why Did He Say

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what He said? And notice He **"cried out with a loud voice,"** so He was very serious in what He said.

Now, if God did forsake Him then, why? In Proverbs, concerning Jesus, we read, **"Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him"** (Pro. 8:30). In fact, as the eternal Son, there was never a time that He and His Father had ever been separated. From all eternity He had been the object of the Father's love. A short time before this scene at the beginning of Christ's ministry we hear the Father say, **"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"** (Matt. 3:17). So why would his Father now abandon and forsake Him? What could possibly be the reason? Did Christ Jesus sin? Did He in some way slip up? Could the Pharisees have been right when they condemned Him as a blasphemer? A thousand times NO!

We read in the New Testament that Jesus' coming into this world and His actions while here on

earth were all prophesied in the writings of the prophets. But they were also foretold in the law of Moses and in the Psalms. **"And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me"** (Luke 24:44).

So we must turn to the Psalms to find the answer to this perplexing saying of Christ. Now these very same words that Christ spoke on the cross are recorded in Psalm 22. **"To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar, A Psalm of David. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent. But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people"** (Ps. 22:1-6). We know this speaks of Christ on the cross because this Psalm goes on to say the following in verses 14 through 18. **"I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments**

among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." Now compare verse 18 of Psalm 22 with this verse in the New Testament: **"And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots"** (Matt. 27:35).

So back in Psalm 22 after we read **"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me,"** we find the answer as to why in verse 3 and verse 6. **"But thou art HOLY"** and **"but I am a WORM"** (Emp. LL). We read in the Old Testament concerning God's holiness, **"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity:..."** (Hab. 1:13). The holiness of God is His greatest attribute. All of God's other attributes are adorned in His holiness. It has been said that it is the attribute of attributes. His power is a holy power. His wrath is a holy wrath and every other attribute of His is adorned in holiness. He is so holy that Isaiah declared **"Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts"** (Isa. 6:5). One of the seraphims **"cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory"** (Isa. 6:3). When Moses wanted to see the Lord's glory, the Lord told him **"Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live"** (Ex. 33:20).

To get a fuller answer we must look at verse 6 of Psalm 22 where we read **"But I am a worm."** That word **"worm"** is an interesting Hebrew word. It was translated "scarlet" 34 times,

"worm" 8 times and "crimson" once. Strong's says, "the crimson-grub." In antiquity the crimson worm was used to obtain the dye that we normally associate with the word "crimson." As the Bible says **"red like crimson"** (Isa. 1:18). To quote a Bible dictionary on this worm: "When the female of the scarlet worm species was ready to give birth to her young, she would attach her body to the trunk of a tree, fixing herself so firmly and permanently that she would never leave again. The eggs deposited beneath her body were thus protected until the larvae were hatched and able to enter their own life cycle. As the mother died, the crimson fluid stained her body and the surrounding wood. From the dead bodies of such female scarlet worms, the commercial scarlet dyes of antiquity were extracted." When I read that description I cannot but think of the blood that the Lord Jesus shed on the cross that His people might have life everlasting. Then in Isaiah I see that sin is also associated with scarlet. **"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool"** (Isa. 1:18). The word for **"crimson"** is the same as the word for **"worm"** in Psalm 22 verse 6. And the word **"scarlet"** is also associated with this same Hebrew word. So sin is as the scarlet worm. They are red like the crimson worm. "I am but a worm:" the crimson worm.

So, back to our question. Why did Jesus say these words? Truly, He was not mistaken. His intense suffering had not affected His mind. He was not confused or delirious, for the Father did indeed forsake Him. The Father

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

1. In II Corinthians 5:17 what are the “old things” that are passed away and “all things” that have become new? -California

Tom Ross
6339 County Rd. 15
South Point, OH
45680

Pastor
Mt. Pleasant
Baptist Church
6939 County Rd. 15
Chesapeake, OH
45619



II Corinthians 5:17 states: **“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”**

The context of the verse displays the monumental change in spiritual condition the elect experience when they are born of the Spirit and come to the realization that they have been reconciled to God by the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The very moment they are brought to spiritual life in the new birth they are given the spiritual graces of repentance and faith in Christ. For the first time in their life they experience spiritual and eternal life in Christ Jesus prompting them to live unto Him, or for Him, rather than themselves as they formerly did. This change is so radical and revolutionary it is likened to the work of creation wherein God alone gave birth to the universe by the breath of His mouth when He spoke it into existence.

Prior to the experience of becoming a new creature the elect were “in Christ” by virtue of an eternal union formed in the Covenant of Grace. Before the world began God graciously chose a specific number out of Adam’s

fallen race and gave them to Christ to redeem. These individuals were selected unconditionally and according to God’s good pleasure and sovereign will (Eph. 1:3-7; II Thess. 2:13-16; II Tim. 1:9). In that same eternal Covenant of Grace the Holy Spirit agreed to regenerate and call all that the Father selected by sovereign grace. So before the elect ever had any knowledge of God, or their redemption by Christ, they were chosen in Him, hence the term “in Christ.”

In time, and according to God’s eternal purpose, God’s elect are “called...out of darkness into His marvelous light” (I Pet. 2:9). They are brought out of the darkness and deadness of their depravity to experience spiritual life by the regenerating and creative power of the Holy Spirit. This remarkable work of sovereign grace is a creative and transformative act. The Holy Spirit creates a “new man,” an entirely new and spiritual nature within the elect that previously did not exist. When the Holy Spirit creates and implants a new nature in the elect they immediately are given the ability to exercise the spiritual graces of repentance and saving faith (Eph. 2:8-10). The love of God is shed abroad in their heart by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5) and for the first time in their life they are now able to love, obey, and bring forth fruit unto God (Rom. 6:10-22). The Spirit of God indwells them and produces spiritual fruit in their life, enabling them to crucify their fleshly lusts and walk in the Spirit

(Gal. 5:22-25).

Everything becomes new in the spiritual realm and as a result their new life in Christ begins to manifest itself. They are changed! They no longer can live as they once did! They have new righteousness, the righteousness of Christ. They have new spiritual garments, the garments of salvation. They have a new nature that that produces new desires aimed at pleasing God (Eph. 4:22-24). They have a new heart that delights in the law of God and desires to follow Christ (Rom. 7:22-25). They have a new will that is surrendered to the claims and commands of Christ (John 14:15; I John 2:3-6). They have a new peace with God (justification). They have a new mind, the mind of Christ, that produces the experience of the “..peace of God, which passes all understanding...” (Phil. 4:7-9). They have new access to God which enables them to pray and enter into the throne room of grace (Heb. 4:13-16). They have a new and blessed hope that looks forward to the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (Titus 2:10-14). They have a new eternal home wherein dwelleth righteousness (II Pet. 3:12-14). The all things that are become new begin to be experienced by the elect the moment they are born of the Spirit and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the promise of John 3:16: **“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life”** (cf. John 5:24).

The old things that are passed away are the sinful lusts and wicked desires of the old man, the fleshly nature we were born with. After I experienced the grace of God I began to hate my

old sinful thoughts, words, and ways. For the first time in my life I experienced real conviction over sin because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the new nature He had created in me. The old things I used to delight in began to lose their power and allure, the closer I was drawn to the Lord. I found myself wanting to crucify, mortify, and put to death the things I used to think, say, and do that displeased God and excited my fleshly passions (Col. 3:1-10). The old words of wickedness, bitterness, and hatred were replaced with songs of praise and a desire to talk to others about Christ. The old friends I caroused with began to separate from me and I from them because we no longer shared the same interests and desires (II Cor. 6:14-18; Eph. 5:3-17). The old falsehoods and philosophies I once held to began to be replaced by Scriptural truth the more I understood my position in Christ (Col. 2:2-10). I have been saved for 36 years and I still struggle with the corruption of the old things of the old fleshly nature, as did Paul (Rom. 7:18-25). In spite of the warfare of the old nature within me I am seeing and experiencing the mighty change which God is working in me. I know that I have been, and am being changed by the sovereign grace of God! What joy floods my soul as I meditate upon where God brought me from and where I am going! I pray the change is evident for all to see. Psalm 40:2-3 declares: **“He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.”**

TOM ROSS

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. What is your position on the “well-meant offer” or “the serious call” of the gospel? - Texas

Matthew Stepp
286 Big Creek Road
Wayne, WV 25570

Pastor
Big Creek
Baptist Church
286 Big Creek Road
Wayne, WV 25570



A Basic understanding of the outward call and the effectual call is necessary to answer this question. The outward call is the preaching of the gospel and from man's perspective, it is always a genuine, well-meant offer, because a Biblical gospel is truly unto “whosoever will” and we do not know “whosoever will” until they come in repentance and faith, by the sovereign grace of God. But the outward call of the evangel cannot save of itself. The only way that salvation of lost sinners can occur, is if the outward call of the gospel is followed by the inward, effectual call of the Holy Ghost. The effectual call is the irresistible grace of the Holy Spirit, as it quickens/regenerates life within the spirit of fallen man. Truly, salvation is a work of God, which transforms a sinner into a child of God. Selah! Think about it!

That is looking at salvation from the eyes of men. As we study our Bibles more deeply, we can see God's perspective of salvation is a little different. So many modern Christians have mistakenly incorporated our finite observation upon God, Himself. They see a God that has sent out a “well-meant offer” of salvation, and “emotionally” hopes/desires that men will come to Him in

repentance and faith. Beloved reader, we need to understand that God **COMMANDS** obedience! **“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent”** (Acts 17:30). The necessarily real aspect of “the serious call,” is that God is dead serious in His command. Selah! Think about it!

But the fact that universally, men willfully and ignorantly spurn God and His commandments, whether thru the audible outward call, or that written upon their hearts, is validation that each descendant of Adam is responsible for their own entry into Hell's torments. **“All have sinned, and come short of the Glory of God”** (Rom. 3:23), and so it is **ALWAYS** a particular redemption, when God saves one of His elect, by imparting life and knowledge through the propitiation of our sin debt via the blood of Jesus Christ and the imputation of righteousness in His perfect life.

The crux of the matter, is whether God “desires” the salvation of all men. **“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all (of us-tms) should come to repentance”** (II Peter 3:9). **“Who will have all (types of-tms) men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth”** (I Tim. 2:4). As one studies the Word of God, it is revealed that God is unchanging, omnipotent and omniscient in nature. Categorically, God,

inherent to His divine nature, “does” what He “desires” to do, and it will **ALWAYS** be good, holy and righteous. Indomitably, God the Sovereign of the universe saves **WHO** He wills (desires), **WHEN** He wills (desires), **HOWEVER** He wills (desires)!

Proponents of the “well-meant offer” oust God from the eternal throne of immutability and omniscience, and clash with every Bible truth, including the exquisite holiness of God and the eternal love of those souls written in the unchanging book of life. Beloved reader, God **KNOWS** who will, and who will not come. **“But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father”** (John 6:64-65). Salvation, in justification and reconciliation, is a transaction of God upon man, without which every single person that hears the gospel will unanimously reject it forever and ever, Amen!

The shallow theologians that persist in unscripturally claiming a “free offer,” have erred in changing the perspective of the gospel from man's commanded burden to go to “all” and commanded desire for salvation of “all,” to foisting that same burden and desire upon a God that already knows the end from the beginning and has immutably foreknown and predestined a fixed number unto salvation, wholly and totally by His sovereign grace. Selah! Think about it! God saves every soul that He has **EVER** desired to save!

“..Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but

he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15-16). That is genuine and real, and our job as Christians and Baptists. But to deny the satisfaction of God is folly. **“He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities”** (Isa. 53:11). Selah! Think about it!
MATTHEW STEPP

Tom Ross
6339 County Rd. 15
South Point, OH
45680

Pastor
Mt. Pleasant
Baptist Church
6939 County Rd. 15
Chesapeake, OH
45619



I must confess that prior to getting this question I have never heard of these phrases as they relate to the preaching of the Gospel. I am an avid reader of historic Baptist writers, the Puritans, Gill, Graves, Spurgeon, Ryle, Cockrell, Pink, and MacArthur. I also enjoy reading a variety of systematic theology works and anything regarding Baptist history. I cannot recall the phrases “well-meant offer” or the “serious call” of the Gospel in my reading. I know the phrases never occur in the Scriptures. So I googled the phrases (who would have ever thought a preacher would use that phrase 30 years ago?). I found that it is largely a controversy in Reformed Protestant circles. With the exception of John MacArthur, I rarely read contemporary Protestant or Reformed writers. I do not identify with either.

From the brief perusal of the articles relating to the phrases, I came to the conclusion that the controversy boils down to whether or not the preaching

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Forum #1

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Matthew Stepp
286 Big Creek Road
Wayne, WV 25570

Pastor
Big Creek
Baptist Church
286 Big Creek Road
Wayne, WV 25570



The first **“old thing”** that has passed away, is found in verse 15 of the text: **“they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them...”** We USED to live for ourselves, but NOW we live for Jesus Christ. Selah! Think about it!

Verse 16 continues the Apostle Paul’s exposition on this new life: **“Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.”** Henceforth is symbolic of the life that we now live, as new creatures in Christ. The things we know about men differ now. Instead of seeing competitors on the stage of life, we see living souls that need the grace of God in their lives. Our perspective becomes that of “caring” what happens to neighbors.

A list of **“old things”** that are passed away, would contain a myriad of carnal and fleshly belongings. Our old nature, our old attitudes, our old desires, promises, hopes and dreams. Our old focus and priorities are gone, being replaced by “new directions.” Our old relationships, friendships, and marriages to the flesh are given notice that there is a new King in our lives.

The old curse of sin is gone, in that the old penalty is remitted and the old power through which

sin had long held sway over us has been broken though by the power of Christ Jesus in our life. The enmity with God that had permeated our souls is finally eradicated, with peace and joy replacing it.

That brings us to the **“all things are become new.”** Our lives are now infused with Christian attributes, as we are reformed into the image of God, as Adam was originally created. Certainly, the fulfillment of our yet future glorification is not yet come, but the earnest of our inheritance is within our daily walk.

A partial list of these “new things” would start with radiant inner joy, that replaces our moody swings between mere happiness and fearful sadness and depression. Even in times of grief and sorrow, we KNOW that all things work together for good, because: **“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. 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. 23:4-6).

Faith, wisdom, peace and longsuffering are now evident in our life as new attributes, inconsistent with our former life. Trusting God to lead, guide and instruct us, will evince a peace that passeth understanding of any “old friends.” Meekness and love will be “new things” that will cause wonder and perplexion to casual observers, as we perform (not so) random acts of kindness, even to our enemies and detractors.

Forgiveness is the most divine of Christian attributes, and it will

be a “new thing” that is practiced freely and frequently upon those we come into contact with on a regular basis. No more of those “old grudges” that caused misery, pain and hatred in our “old lives.” Evidence of new ways of living in “new liberty” and “new freedom” from the **“old things”** that so often held us back from living a really fruitful life that would glorify our Creator and heavenly Father will be plentiful.

One final note: We still yet are waiting for the final transformation into our glorified bodies, when we put off the corruption of this flesh. **“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ...So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory”** (I Cor. 15:52-54). **“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. ...And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new”** (Rev. 21:1-5).

MATTHEW STEPP



Forum #2

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of the Gospel is sincere or not, especially in reference to the reprobate. This is clearly a philosophical question entirely

outside the realm of what is revealed in Scripture. What I do know is that I am responsible to preach the Gospel to every creature whether they ever come to faith in Christ or not. Every time I witness to my grandchildren, knock on a door, witness to strangers, hand out a Gospel tract, or preach from the pulpit I am sincerely hoping and praying that the Gospel message would be made effectual by the God of all grace. I do not know who the elect are prior to their regeneration and conversion. If the Spirit of God regenerates them and gives them the graces of repentance and saving faith, they believe the Gospel. If they are reprobate they will never come to faith but are left to perish in their sins. Either way, I am responsible to preach the Gospel to everyone according to Mark 16:15: **“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”** The inspired command does not delineate between elect or reprobate creatures!

Furthermore, I believe that God will use His Word to either save the elect or judge the reprobate when they stand before the Lord Jesus Christ at the Great White Throne Judgment. I believe the truth of Isaiah 55:11 which declares: **“So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”** Jesus said: **“He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day”** (John 12:48, I just preached three messages from this text in a series called

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Forum #2

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“Rejecting Christ,” go to www.sermonaudio.com/mtpleasant to listen). II Corinthians 2:14-17 reveals what the inspired apostle thought about the matter: **“Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.”**

God has made it very clear in His Word that all men, whether they are elect or reprobate, are responsible to repent and believe the Gospel. I am not in the practice of questioning the sincerity of God or His Word. Acts 17:30-31 declares: **“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”** I John 5:9-12 records: **“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that**

God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” I take it that God the Holy Spirit was absolutely sincere when He inspired these Scriptures to be written and preserved.

I would urge the readers of this forum question to adopt the bold declarations of the Apostle Paul: **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek...For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified... Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory”** (Rom. 1:16; I Cor. 2:2; II Tim. 2:9-10). Leave the philosophical questioning regarding God’s sincerity to the intellectual elite and the theologians. Let us be up and doing what historic Baptists have been engaged in since the Lord Jesus Christ gave the first Baptist church the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20: **“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.”**

TOM ROSS



Why Did He Say

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had to. Understanding why is all important to understanding the Gospel. Herein lies the doctrine of substitution and imputation. Herein lies the very doctrine of salvation by grace. If we cannot understand the answer to this all important question, then we cannot properly understand the Gospel. You see, God forsook His only begotten Son that He might not forsake me. He forsook Him so that He could have mercy on those for whom the Son substituted and yet be just in doing it. Here we have mercy and justice meeting together. As the Psalmist said, **“Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other”** (Ps. 85:10). That happened in the person of Jesus the Christ. So we have in type with the scarlet worm the Lord being made sin. Paul makes it very clear when he says, **“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him”** (II Cor. 5:21). God cannot look upon iniquity and His Son was made to be sin. Here we have the sins of all who will ever believe imputed to Christ so that His elect might be made the righteousness of God. But it is in Him, that is His Son, that we are made righteous. Again Paul says, **“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree”** (Gal. 3:13). He was made a curse and the Father forsook Him for a brief time. Peter speaks of Him bearing our sins when he wrote, **“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree...”** (I Peter 2:24). And again Peter writes, **“For Christ also hath once suffered**

for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit” (I Peter 3:18).

To every believer who by faith is trusting in the substitutionary work of Jesus Christ, I can with confidence say that Jesus took your sins out of the way and nailed them to His cross. Paul tells us so when he said, **“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross”** (Col. 2:14).

So why did Jesus say, **“My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?”** It was for His people’s sake. It was because He took my sins and nailed them to his cross and I bear them no more. This is my peace. My peace is in Him and not my works. The writer of Colossians says, **“having made peace through the blood of his cross”** (Col. 1:20). Christ’s saying speaks of the absolute holiness of God and the awfulness of sin for the wages of sin is death, spiritual death. It speaks of the vast chasm between the eternally lost and the eternally saved. Sin is so serious and God is so holy that the man or woman who dies in their sins will never be able to offset the debt of sin. After a billion years it goes on and on and on. To think that the Son of God was able to satisfy that awful debt for His people is mind boggling. Even during that moment of being forsaken by the Father He still cried, **“MY God, MY God”** (Emp. LL). Even while forsaken He was still the impeccable Son of God Who knew no sin. When we are in the presence of the Lord for one billion years we will have no less days to be with our Lord than when we first begun. It speaks of

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Why Did He Say

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the difference between eternal horror and eternal bliss; between eternal death and eternal life.

“**My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me**” when spoken by the Son of God are the words of substitution by way of imputation. The Lord Jesus substituting for a people which is the heart of the gospel of salvation. Only the sinless eternal Son of God could speak such true and just words as He was securing eternal life for His children. When spoken by Christ they are the words of substitution.

May God bless.



Faith in

(Continued from page 1) ◊

but it wasn't!” My eyebrows go up as I listen further to the local resident. “A big, red lawnmower ran through here yesterday! Yeah, I know! I wouldn't have believed it either, if I hadn't seen it with my own two eyes.”

As I predictably look at him with askance, he continued, “You don't believe me? Come over here and see the twenty-foot wide tire tracks!” As I followed him, he directed me toward an indentation in the grassy area, that indeed could be a depression in the sandy soil that went as far as the eye could see in both directions north and south. The witness could see that I was still not convinced, and he tugged my arm toward the not too distant coastline. Less than a quarter-mile away, my eyes popped out, as there came an end to the devastation, with a delineation as abrupt as could be. Next to several fallen and severed tree trunks, stood a grove of palm trees and

normal vegetation and as with the alleged tire tracks, the boundary of the clipped landscape was without a doubt clearly marked as destruction versus greenery could be visually seen in a horizontal line from north to south.

The local denizen was watching me carefully, as his story began to have an effect on me. My brow furled, as my mind tried to evaluate this evidence of a huge lawn mower, that this man insisted had caused this obvious damage around me, toward the west. “How far over that way does the damage go?” I asked. “About two miles,” he replied. Then he added tartly, “that's how big the mower was. It just took one swipe at us.”

I shook my head again, as if to clear it. I just was not able to picture this huge lawnmower that the guy was trying to tell me about. “One more thing,” the man again led by example and began tromping across the path of what my mind kept telling me, was simply a tornado of some monstrous sort, that must've come through this Atlantic coastal area. As we jumped into his truck and the fellow drove south, I mused in silence, trying to sort through the evidence I'd witnessed. I almost didn't notice when the truck slowed down and there before us, as the man applied the brakes, I saw a big blackish pond in the middle of the field. As the man gestured toward it, I stared at him blankly. “What is it?” I asked. “Oil,” he said simply. As I still didn't make the connection with the surreal surroundings, he finished his informative reply, “the big red lawnmower stopped here for several minutes and it was leaking oil.”

As I looked on incredulously, he hopped out of the truck and I followed likewise on foot up to

the edge of the purported puddle of motor oil that was almost an acre total. Sure enough, I could smell the acrid stuff and the closer we got, the more sure the evidence that 5w-30, or some such equivalent was filling this pond. “Whattya say now, mister?” he said as our eyes met. I simply shook my head again. The evidence was mounting, to support this guy's story, but the premise of a huge lawnmower was just too immense for me to take in. “You say it was red?” I finally replied. “Yep.” “Did it have any writing on it?” I couldn't believe I was asking the questions. But if I was going to comprehend the situation, I needed more information. “It did have some white markings,” the man answered, “but it wasn't any language that I know of. I don't know whether it was Russian or Alien.”

As the beloved reader has allowed me to spin this tale of imagination, I would like to consider the implications of the visiting spectator. As the incredible evidence mounts, we must indeed do something with it, but it really falls under three categories what we will do. **“And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. So Paul departed from among them. Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them”** (Acts 17:32-34). Let us look at the three responses, 1) **“some mocked;”** 2) **“others...We will hear”** some more before we decide; and 3) **“certain...believed.”** Ultimately, it is actually two. Either you believe, or you do not.

Now, concerning the “big, red lawnmower,” my purpose

was to create an “unbelievable story” to Christians. The Apostle Paul spoke to Gentiles about the “unbelievable story” of the resurrection of Christ from the dead, but I can not do that for you, beloved reader. For a Christian, that is solid fact. What I wanted to convey to your consciousness was a tale that would show how “unbelievable” the resurrection and existence of God are to the lost and dying world we live in. “No way!” they say. Did you say, “No way!” to the big red lawnmower's existence? Yes? Then I have succeeded in my endeavor. It is exactly the same thing. Let us examine the story again from this staggering perspective. **“Who against hope believed in hope, ...And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God”** (Rom. 4:18-20).

In the story of the big red lawnmower, everything that was witnessed by our protagonist was circumstantial evidence (The local farmer had the additional testimony of eyewitness, but that is another article. Read II Peter 1:16-21). Certainly something had happened to cause the great destruction, but since we had not been there, we must work our way backward with the evidence at hand. It could have been a tornado. “Yeah! That could have caused this damage in this manner! At least some of the questions could be answered. But what about the motor oil and the ‘tire depressions’?” But, the next logical thing to do would then be to check with the National Weather Service and many other

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Faith in

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media sources to find out if such a natural phenomenon had indeed occurred. If that checked out, then we can discard the fabulous tale of the Atlantic coast man and search for more evidence concerning the other two phenomena. But what if it did not? What if the weather bureau authorities were as flabbergasted as I was?

The fact that this eyewitness purportedly had seen something out of the realm of “natural,” was something that then must be seriously considered. Certainly, we could check out his background to see if he would be considered a reliable witness, or whether he is known as just a liar or a fanciful storyteller. We would need to canvass the area for more witnesses and see if their accounts jived with our original testifier. But what if they did? What if others had seen, heard, felt and smelled the lawnmower? At some point, we will have ENOUGH evidence to make a decision, one way or the other. Yes or no. Believe or disbelieve. Will we still refuse to believe, despite all the evidence that piles up, simply because we CAN NOT believe in such a far-fetched tale?

The search for God is such a matter. Many have declined the search in apathy and arrogance (I usually define this word as ignorance on purpose!). Most Americans do not really care to put out the effort to find out for sure, if God exists. Some have exerted themselves and still ended up disbelieving the evidence of nature’s God (as the Declaration of Independence puts it), of dismissing the evidence that God has a chosen people in each generation and rejecting the internal evidence of an infallible

Holy Bible given by God to reveal His very nature and person. His prophecies continue to be checked off perfectly according to holy writ and sovereign decree, but it is cast off by so many as phony, forged or worse. It really is not hard to make a case for “a god” or for “intelligent design” in our ordered universe, but it really is hard for man to believe that it is Elohim Jehovah ALONE that is responsible. **“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse”** (Rom. 1:20). As someone once stated concerning the book of Revelation, in particular: “It really is not hard to understand the apocalyptic book, the hard part is to believe it!”

Beloved reader, make the effort, please! Find out for sure if the big red lawnmower has run through your neighborhood! If Christians are correct, your eternal future lays in the balance, ready to tip over into destruction. If they are not, would not you want to know for sure? Just to gain peace of mind, one way or the other? There is enough information out there to believe, because some do and still go to Hell. Benjamin Franklin is evidence of such a fate. How can anyone read his writings and not conclude that he firmly believed in God (by evidence), yet never believed in Jesus Christ to the saving of his soul (ultimately that faith is given by the grace of God, Eph. 2:8-9).

But, I am praying that the Lord will reveal His truth and make it effectual for the beloved reader, and that you will believe in all the evidence that God has left in this world for you to see His handiwork. **“The heavens**

declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard” (Ps. 19:1-3). May God bless His Word to you and your family. **“..The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel”** (Mark 1:15). God is real! Selah! Think about it!



“Choosing” Is Scriptural

By Nathaniel Hille
of Plant City, Florida

“There are some unscriptural hymns. There are some Biblical hymns. Then there are some Biblical hymns that are misappropriated to a subject. Regardless, those hymns that are Biblical ought to be sung for a two fold purpose: 1) Praise unto our God: **“Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints”** (Ps. 149:1); 2) Edification of the saints: **“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”** (Col. 3:16).

Songs are very similar to the Scriptures in that the context of a hymn must be taken into account. This makes sense because Biblical hymns are based upon Scriptures. So when we sing a song we must ascertain its context. A verse taken out of its context may appear to be Arminian or it may appear to be Hyper-Calvinist. However, if it is taken in the

context of the Scriptures it will prove to be that which praises God, as well as edification, provoking, encouraging, beseeching, correcting, rebuking, a child of God. For example that wonderful hymn *I Have Decided to Follow Jesus*—Oh, I can hear the CALVINIST-POLICE now with their tail-feathers all ruffled. Polishing their bull-horns and preparing to shout “Arminian hymn! Arminian hymn!” and get out their scissors and glue to cover up that hymn. As the Lord said unto some religious zealots of His day, **“Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God”** (Matt. 22:29). The error comes because one does not know the Scriptures and a failure of **“rightly dividing the word of truth”** (II Tim. 2:15).

The context of the hymn, *I Have Decided To Follow Jesus*, could very well be the same as what Joshua stated, **“Choose you this day whom ye will serve”** (Josh. 24:15). Many people take this verse out of context. And the same ones who take this verse out of context will take the teaching and admonishing hymn of *I Have Decided To Follow Jesus* out of context. Let us back up and take a look at a larger portion of the text. **“Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD”** (Josh. 24:14-15).

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First of all, to whom is Joshua speaking? Saved or lost people? Clearly, these were people who were saved. Remember, lost people are dead. That truth is taught throughout the Scriptures. Lost people cannot choose or decide because they are dead. Joshua is speaking to the generation who went into and inherited the land God had promised to them. That generation had been saved, regenerated, quickened, and made alive by the Lord God.

Second of all, notice the statement, **“choose you this day whom ye will SERVE”** [Emphasis is NRH]. Service is what Joshua is speaking of. Service is NOT salvation! I know that false teachers, or men who have not been taught the truth use this verse in an unscriptural fashion, telling sinners that they must choose Jesus. In doing so, they take it out of its setting and context. I cannot help what unlearned men do; I cannot help what false teachers do. Yet, it ought not to cause God’s ministers, preacher, pastors, and church members to stop teaching and admonishing our brethren and sisters with the Word of God and in psalms and hymns and spiritual singing. It seems to me that some would have us get our sovereign grace-police badges, billy-clubs, and our bull-horns and shout to the Holy Spirit that He is Arminian and that verse is Arminian. Why not take the pen-knife of Jehudi and cut out this verse because it does not fit in their sovereign grace box? After all, does not Matthew 28:20, a part of the Great Commission given unto the church, command the church to go around labeling everything as Arminian and Calvinism? Is

not that what God sent His Son to do? And now His Son sent His church to do (John 20:21)?

The reality is that these verses (Joshua 24:14-15) were spoken unto saved people. There may have been some who had not been saved in the audience, I do not know, but Joshua was dealing with the subject of service and not salvation. The truth remains that we MUST choose whom we will serve; Jesus taught us that we cannot serve two masters. **“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other, Ye cannot serve God and mammon”** (Matt. 6:24). Paul besought the saints at Rome to **“yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God,”** **“even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness”** (Rom. 6:13, 19). The word **“yield”** is rendered by Strong’s concordance (#3936): “to stand beside, to be at hand, assist” and others. Beloved, we are not marionettes and God is NOT a marionette. He is the sovereign God and we are His responsible creatures, and if saved, we are His responsible children. As long as we are unwilling to live as though He is our Sovereign we ought to lower the “sovereignty banner,” for did He not say, **“And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say”** (Luke 6:46), or “and why call ye me, Sovereign, Sovereign, and do not the things that I say?” Beloved, we must realize that God and Him being sovereign goes beyond Him saving whom He will, and into the very lives of those that He does save. Our willful submission to His will for our lives is the greatest living

testimony of the sovereignty of God.

I suppose that if Joshua were like many sovereign gracers (and I use that term loosely, for many are not sovereign grace at all—but do-nothings, antinomians, and hyper-calvinists) Joshua would have written, “Now if and when the Lord forces you, you will serve him” or “When God makes you serve him” or some other false fatalistic concept. Yet, Joshua did NOT write that. The Holy Spirit of God did NOT inspire that. God did NOT breathe that. Rather, Joshua, the Holy Spirit, God breathed out the truth of our responsibility, as His people, to choose, to decide, to yield unto Him a righteous, holy, acceptable service in agreement with what God’s written Word says. It is not my fault, nor any other believers’ fault, that Arminians do NOT rightly divide the word of truth. But in our anxious scurry to get away from the false doctrine(s) of the Arminian free-willers and our desire not to be labeled as an Arminian-sympathizer, many well-meaning brethren are driving themselves, and the church of the living God they are members of, into just an equally heinous error and contemptible false doctrine known as hyper-Calvinism, do-nothingism, antinomianism, and fatalism. Beloved, this ought not to be!

In a conversation with two other brethren of the Lord, both pastors of a church of the Lord, I was proposed this question: “Are those two (Arminian and hyper-Calvinism) our only choices?” The answer is **“NO!!!”** **“EMPHATICALLY NO!!!”** There is the truth of the Scriptures. And beloved that is where we need to be. Preaching and teaching in our sermons and in our hymns the sovereignty of God in everything

including salvation, as well as in our lives and the responsibility of lost sinners to repent and believe the Gospel, as well as His born-again children to serve the Lord Jesus Christ in and through His church, that we might all present our **“...bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God”** (Rom. 12:1-2). This is the truth of the Scriptures that the Lord’s church has believed and declared from her inception.

We find in Scripture that Jesus chose whom He would serve. Was not our Savior’s vicarious death and sufferings at Calvary voluntary? Did not God volunteer to save us? Did not Jesus volunteer to die that we might be saved? Or was His death and the gift of the Son compelled? It must be one or the other. Did not Jesus say, **“For I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me”** (John 6:38); **“Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him”** (John 8:28-29); **“But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence”** (John 14:31); **“If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love”** (John

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15:10); **“I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do”** (John 17:4); **“And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt”** (Mark 14:35,26). **“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”** (Phil. 2:5-8). From these passages of Scripture we see the truth that Jesus Christ voluntarily chose to submit and keep the will and commandments of His Father. Was not Calvary the commandment Jesus received from the Father? **“Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father”** (John 10:17-18). Beloved, we see that the Lord Jesus did all of these things Himself and was not forced or compelled, but willfully gave Himself, willingly submitted to **“Thus saith the LORD.”**

We are reminded of the answer Isaiah the prophet gave unto the Lord’s question, **“Also I heard the**

voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me” (Isa. 6:8). If that is NOT volunteering and choosing, then words have lost all meaning. You see, after that Isaiah’s **“iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged”** (Isa. 6:7) we find Him choosing whom He would serve.

Did not Mary choose that good part while Martha was careful and troubled about many things (Luke 10:40-42)?

We read of the words of Saul of Tarsus which he stated when he was saved by the Lord, **“And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do”** (Acts 9:6)? Paul had surrendered His life unto the Lord, not in order to be saved, but because the Lord had saved him. See how Paul chose to serve the Lord and yielded his members as instruments of righteousness? See how Paul did it voluntarily and was not a puppet, but rather a willing vessel of honor in the hand of his God and Savior. Did not Paul later write, **“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith”** (II Tim. 4:7)? That is what the Lord willed for Paul to do; and he did it.

Did not David willingly prepare **“with all my might for the house of my God... Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of mine own proper good, of gold and silver, which I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house”** (I Chron. 29:2-3). And do we not see the artificers and the chief of the fathers and the princes of the tribes of Israel and the captains and the rulers of the king’s work; how that they **“offered willingly, And gave for the service of the house of**

God” (I Chron. 29:6-7)? And upon **“offering willingly”** we are told **“Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the LORD: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy”** (I Chron. 29:9). In all of these Scriptures we find that we are taught that God’s people are to choose willingly to serve the Lord. And the result was **“rejoiced with great joy.”** Maybe this is why many are not **“rejoiced with great joy”**...they are not choosing to serve the Lord.

There is a principle and a teaching that is at risk, which is far greater than any song. The principle is that God’s people are to willingly serve Him who loved them and gave Himself for them. **“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me”** (Gal. 2:20). And in many Biblical songs we are taught and admonished to do just that! And those songs must be sung. And those sermons must be preached. And God’s people must choose this day whom they will serve.

I fear that we are being taught that everything is left up to God’s sovereignty and that we have absolutely no responsibility whatsoever. Do you men of God—pastors, not desire to see the men and women of God that the Holy Spirit has made you overseers of serving God more faithfully, more willingly, choosing Him instead of this world? Then we had better preach that they need to **“choose this day whom ye will serve”** (Josh. 24:15) more than we have been! There are too many sermons and false ideas that if

God wants me to do something for Him, than He is sovereign and I will automatically do it. My fellow ministers, that is a vile and contemptible heresy. Jesus never taught that. Scriptures never teach that. Rather, Jesus taught in word and gave example that we are to submit willingly and willfully to God’s Word. In fact, Jesus taught that those who do NOT choose to serve the Lord show evidence that they are not saved and have never been regenerated. **“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed”** (John 8:31).

Scripture teaches of God’s people volunteering for the Lord. Do not the Scriptures say that we are to be **“even as he is”** (I John 3:3)? Do not the scriptures declare that we who are foreknown are also predestinated to **“be conformed to the image of his Son”** (Rom. 8:29)? And if Jesus chose then ought we not to choose to serve the Lord in the work and commandment that the Father hath given unto us? And does not that commandment He has given unto us, His church, include **“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you”** (Matt. 28:20)? And does that not include the teaching and admonishing by songs and hymns, as well as teaching in word and deed God’s people to **“choose you this day whom ye will serve”** (Josh. 24:15)?

Did not Paul write unto Titus a true saying, **“This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men”**

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THE BIBLE AND THE NEWSPAPER

Readers of the BBB are urged to submit religious news items which they may read in their local paper or some other publication. In sending these please give the name of the publication as well as the date it was printed. We will not be able to print all which are submitted, but we welcome any item you may feel we should read.

Send them to The Berea Baptist Banner, PO Box 39, Mantachie, MS 38855-0039.

GOVERNMENT DEMANDS FAMILY-PLANNING FUNDS GO TO ABORTION CENTERS

(WNS)--Beginning this year, states will not be allowed to defund Planned Parenthood, according to a new Health and Human Services mandate. The rule, posted Dec. 14, requires states to allocate \$286 million in annual federal family-planning service funds based only on whether an organization provides those services. Pro-life state legislators have worked to cut Title X funding from groups like Planned Parenthood that also provide abortions. The rule "will prevent future attempts to prohibit Title X funding to current and potential subrecipients for reasons other than their ability to meet the objectives of the Title X program," Obama administration officials declared. Opponents argued abortion centers could use Title X money to end the lives of unborn babies, or redirect private money toward abortion once they receive government funds to provide other family planning services.

FEDERAL JUDGE PUTS BABY BURIAL RULE ON HOLD

(WNS)--Texas abortion centers can continue disposing of aborted baby body parts in sewer systems and landfills, due to a federal judge's ruling Dec. 15. A law set to go into effect Dec. 19 would have required abortion centers and abortion-providing hospitals to bury or cremate the remains of aborted babies. U.S. District Judge Sam Sparks delayed the law until Jan. 6 and will

hear further arguments from Texas Assistant Attorney General John Langley and the pro-abortion Center for Reproductive Rights, which filed suit against the law.

OKLAHOMA LAWMAKER BACKTRACKS PRO-LIFE SIGN BILL

(WNS)--Oklahoma businesses will no longer have to post pro-life signs in public restrooms under revised legislation. Under the amended regulations, only abortion centers will have to post signs directing pregnant women to services dedicated to protecting their unborn children. Regulations voted on and passed in December would have mandated placement of the signs in public restrooms in all businesses licensed by the state health department. In a Dec. 16 press release, state Sen. A.J. Griffin said she was responding to businesses' concerns about the cost of posting the signs, but she confirmed the new rules—set to take effect Jan. 1, 2018 if signed into law—will apply to abortion centers.

TEXAS MOVES TO PULL PLANNED PARENTHOOD FUNDING

(WNS)--Texas will no longer send \$3.1 million of Medicaid funding to Planned Parenthood, according to a letter sent to the organization on Dec. 21. The letter, from Texas Health and Human Services Commission Inspector General Stuart Bowen, gave Planned Parenthood 30 days' notice before the state shuts off funding. In the letter, Bowen cited the undercover videos filmed by the Center for Medical Progress, "which

contain evidence that Planned Parenthood violated state and federal law" by tailoring abortion procedures to leave babies as intact as possible and selling baby body parts for profit.

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS CHINESE CATHOLICS CAUGHT IN VATICAN-BEIJING TUG-OF-WAR

(WNS)--The warming relations between the Holy See and Beijing cooled late last month after a top Chinese leader stressed the need for the Catholic Church in China to promote socialism and remain independent from outside forces. The latest tensions come as the Vatican works with Beijing to reach an agreement on the issue of confirming bishops, part of an effort to reestablish relations between the two parties. Beijing broke ties with the Vatican in 1949, forcing Catholics to either join the government-run Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association (CPCA) or face imprisonment. Over time, Chinese Catholics formed an underground church faithful to the pope. The total Chinese Catholic population numbers about 12 million.



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(Titus 3:8)? Never at any time did Paul write concerning serving the Lord in a hyper-Calvinistic fashion. And yet, that is the prevailing practice among many sovereign grace churches today. Many are orthodox in doctrine, but not in practice—for we do NOT practice the sovereignty of God. Paul did! For Paul believed that God was sovereign and that He would save whom He would. Therefore, Paul went everywhere preaching God's Word and enduring **"all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory"** (II Tim. 2:10).

We believe that He is sovereign, but we do NOT practice it like we ought to. May the Holy Spirit prick our hearts and stir our spirits to this end for this is His office work. May we yield our members as instruments of righteousness unto Him for that is our duty. Maran-atha.



From the Pen of a Country Preacher



Milburn R. Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)

Christ On the Rapture

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 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 14:1-3)

These verses are an ever-gushing stream of living water to a thirsty soul. For over 1900 years they have been particularly dear to believers the world over. They have cheered fainting hearts in sick rooms. They have given courage to the dying when

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Christ On the

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no human comforters could help. They have enriched the living, enabling them to face a frowning world. May God the Holy Spirit use them this day to comfort and cheer the hearts of those who may hear this message.

THE COMING OF CHRIST

In verse 3 Christ emphatically declares: **“I will come again.”** These words refer to the second coming of Christ. Whenever the Lord speaks of coming again, here and elsewhere, He means His own personal second advent at the end of this age. Consider a few references He made to this event. **“For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels. . .”** (Matt. 16:27). **“Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh”** (Matt. 25:13). **“When the Son of man shall come in his glory. . .”** (Matt. 25:31). **“Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven”** (Matt. 26:64). **“If I will that he tarry till I come. . .”** (John 21:22). **“Behold, I come quickly”** (Rev. 22:7). **“And, behold, I come quickly”** (Rev. 22:12). **“Surely I come quickly”** (Rev. 22:20).

The Greek word rendered **“I will come”** is in the present tense, and the same that is used in Revelation 22:20 where Christ said: **“I come quickly.”** The first and second advents are the two great events to which our minds should be directed at all times.

Some seek to play down this plain statement on the return of Christ for His saints. They say these words mean Christ's coming again to His disciples after His resurrection from the dead. This meaning cannot be reconciled

with the context which is about preparing a place for them in the Father's house during His absence. When Christ ascended to Heaven the disciples did not go with Him to the Father's house at that time (John 13:36). The words **“that where I am, there ye may be also”** do not fit a post-resurrection appearance of Christ.

Still others say it is a spiritual coming to His people in comfort and help now. Or, as others say, it is a spiritual coming in His Word and the sacraments. These ideas will not fit the context either. They also ignore that the work of comforting God's people is the task of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-18), not Christ. So far as His spiritual presence is concerned, Christ has never left His people (Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5). So He does not need to come spiritually to His people, for in this sense He has never left them.

Another rather large group say this means Christ's coming to remove them at last by death. But at death Christ does not come to the believer. At death the believer goes to be with Christ. In Philippians 1:23 Paul said: **“. . .having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ. . .”** (cf. Acts 7:59; II Cor. 5:6-8). There is no such thing as a second coming of Christ each time a believer dies.

Nor do the words **“I will come again”** refer to the descent of the Holy Spirit. This idea also ignores the context which is about preparing a place in the Father's house and then coming to receive them and take them to Heaven. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit is a distinct person, and His coming is not the coming of Christ.

The words: **“I will come again”** are best explained in Acts 1:9-11: **“And when he had spoken these**

things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”

THE ASSURANCE OF HIS RETURN

“. . .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. . .” (John 14:2-3). This was a gracious way of assuring their troubled hearts that what He said was so. In a manner of speaking, He said: **“Do not be afraid because I am leaving you. Our separation is not eternal. There is plenty of room for you in Heaven. I am going to prepare a place for you. I will come again and take you safely there to the place where I am soon to go. I will not deceive you.”** This was said with the utmost simplicity and tenderness, for the purpose of creating in them the deepest confidence in His words. Dare we doubt that He is coming again?

No wonder when Paul wrote of the Rapture of the saints he declared: **“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord”** (I Thess. 4:15). Paul is referring to what Christ taught in John 14:1-3. The apostle in I Thessalonians 4 was not introducing some new teaching as some suppose. He is teaching the Rapture of the saints at the coming of Christ---the very doctrine preached by His Lord.

HIS DESTINATION IS THE FATHER'S HOUSE

The place to which Christ was

going was **“the Father's house.”** It was to the Father's house to which He was going to go: **“I go”** (John 14:2-3). The Father's house is the Third Heaven, God's dwelling place (Deut. 26:15; Ps. 33:14; I Kings 8:13, 27; II Cor. 5:1). The Father's house is the home of Christ and Christians. His Father is our Father: **“I ascend unto my Father, and your Father”** (John 20:17).

The coming again is the counterpart of going away. It is clear from the context that He is going to the Father's house in Heaven. Note the preceding verses: **“. . .Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father”** (John 13:1). **“. . .that he was come from God, and went to God”** (John 13:3). Note the succeeding verses: **“Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”** (John 14:5-6). **“. . .I go unto my Father”** (John 14:12). **“Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father. . .”** (John 14:28).

Christ was going to the Father's house, going there to prepare a place for His church, and, having done so, He would return and take the church with Him to the Father's house. This is a literal going away of Christ to Heaven, and a literal return of Christ from Heaven. Anything less than this meaning will not fit the context. Describing this same event the Apostle wrote: **“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with**

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the trump of God. . ." (I Thess. 4:16).

In the Father's house to which He was going there were **"many mansions"** or permanent abiding places (Ps. 23:6; Heb. 13:14). These **"many mansions"** are in actual existence now. There is room enough for all in the Father's house, for it is a great house of many dwelling places. In these mansions is room enough for all kinds of people, for little saints and big saints.

These **"many mansions"** are for the **"many"** ordained to eternal life (Acts 13:48), the **"many"** for whom Christ gave Himself a ransom (Matt. 20:28), and **"many"** for whom He shed His precious blood (Matt. 26:28), the **"many"** He bare the sins of (Isa. 53:12; Heb. 9:28), the **"many"** He justified by His knowledge (Isa. 53:11), the **"many"** sons He engaged to bring to glory (Heb. 2:10), the **"many"** He made righteous (Rom. 5:19). The expression **"many mansions"** denotes fullness and sufficiency of room for His people. There were already **"many mansions"** for the Old Testament saints (Heb. 11:10; 12:28; Rev. 21:12). He was going to make **"many"** more for His blood-bought church!

HIS REASON FOR LEAVING

" . . . I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again. . . " (John 14:2-3). Twice in these words Heaven is called **"a place."** Heaven is not only a state, but also a place from which Christ descends and to which He ascended.

Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. Christ prepares the place for His people, and His people for the place. He was

about to leave for the Father's house for the expressed purpose of preparing a dwelling place for His church. The prepared place must not remain without the people for whom it is prepared. The figure here is taken from one on a journey, who goes before his companions to provide a place to lodge in, and to make the necessary preparations for their entertainment.

In what sense did Jesus Christ go to prepare a place in Heaven for His people? Did He in fact prepare man's Heaven? Has He made ready a place suited for us in every respect? These questions deserve and demand honest Bible answers.

First, our Redeemer has gone before as a forerunner into Heaven to take possession of it in the name of His people. Hebrews 6:19-20 says: **"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."** Aaron, in Israel, acted as a forerunner for the nation of Israel. He entered the holiest of all once a year to make propitiation for the people. Even so Christ, being our great High Priest and representing us, has entered the Father's house to open the way for us (Heb. 9:11-12). He entered into the Father's presence and presented the merits of His sacrifice for sin.

Second, Christ is preparing a place for them by interceding continually for them at God's right hand: **"For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us"**

(Heb. 9:24). Christ intercedes at God's right hand. By pleading the merits of His blood, He makes us always acceptable in Himself, though unworthy in ourselves. Thank God that Jesus Christ is **"at the right hand of God"** and that He **"maketh intercession for us"** (Rom. 8:34).

Third, Christ is in Heaven building a future home for His bride, the New Testament church. The many mansions already prepared when He spoke our text were for the priests, the prophets, the psalmists, the potentates, the patriarchs, and the people of the Old Testament dispensation. He did not deem these suitable for His bride. Hence He is now preparing an abode which will be more glorious than all within God's creation at present. This is none other than **"the holy city, new Jerusalem"** (Rev. 21:2). It is **"prepared as a bride adorned for her husband"** because it will be the future home of **"the bride, the Lamb's wife"** (Rev. 21:9). Its complete description is found in Revelation 21:10-27.

THE GREAT RECEPTION

" . . . I will come again, and receive you unto myself. . . " (John 14:3). Paul describes this same event in these words: **"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord"** (I Thess. 4:16-17). When Jesus Christ comes again He will receive all believers unto Himself. The coming of Christ is in order to **"our gathering together unto him"** (II Thess. 2:1).

Oh, the unspeakable joy of meeting Christ in the air and of being for ever with Him and all the saints! It makes our cup to run over with joy to contemplate enjoying Christ for ever! This is the perfection of bliss! Now there are times when we are not with Christ due to our many backslidings. But at the meeting in the air we shall meet Christ visibly and bodily never to part from Him. Christ wants His redeemed people with Him. For this He solemnly prayed: **"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am. . . "** (John 17:24). At the Rapture He is coming to take us all home to the Father's house! What a family reunion that is going to be! The final end of Christ's going away and coming again is that His disciples may be once more with Him and enjoy His company for ever!

CHRIST AND CHRISTIANS IN THE FATHER'S HOUSE

When the Rapture occurs we will not immediately return to earth as some suppose. The coming of Christ to the earth with His saints is to take place at His post-trib coming. The coming in John 14:1-3 is His pre-trib coming for the saints. At His pre-trib coming we go with Christ back to the Father's house. Mark the words of Christ carefully: **" . . . that where I am, there ye may be also."** At this coming He takes us to the place He has prepared for us in the Father's house.

I Thessalonians 4:13-18 tells us we will meet Christ in the air, but it does not tell us what we will do after this. But John 14:1-3 discloses that after the meeting in the air we go to the Father's house at His ascension (Mark 16:19; Ps. 110:1; Acts 7:55; I Peter 3:22). He is coming back from Heaven: **" . . . "**

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the Lord himself shall descend from heaven. . .” (I Thess. 4:16). Jesus said: **“I will come again.”** When He comes from Heaven He takes us up to Heaven: **“ . . . that where I am, there ye may be also.”** Christ will not count His glory full until He brings the many sons to glory (Heb. 2:10-13). God the Father is in Heaven waiting for His children to come home! The Rapture is their home-going!

This truth of Christ taking the saints to the Father's house in Heaven at the Rapture harmonizes with other Scripture concerning the events of the end time. Rewards are going to be given out in Heaven: **“Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven. . .”** (Matt. 5:12; cf. Luke 6:23). In the Book of Revelation the twenty-four elders are seen in Heaven with their crowns, and crowns will not be given out until Christ comes (II Tim. 4:8; I Pet. 5:4). Then in Revelation 19:11-21 we see Heaven opened to let the glorified saints return with Christ to earth for the Battle of Armageddon. The saints cannot come with Christ from Heaven unless they have previously gone to Heaven with Him at a pre-trib Rapture.

THE COMFORT OF THE RAPTURE

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me” (John 14:1). These words were spoken when the hearts of His disciples were greatly disturbed (John 13:21). They would soon lose His bodily presence by His ascension to the Father. One of His disciples would betray Him and another would deny Him. All their

hopes of a temporal kingdom being immediately erected had vanished. They would be left alone to meet trials and persecutions.

So to comfort their troubled hearts He assures them that His departure is not for ever. Some day He will come back from the Father's house. At that moment He will receive them unto Himself and take them to the very place He has prepared for them. No greater words of comfort could have been spoken. No wonder when Paul wrote of the Rapture he mentioned the comfort of this doctrine: **“Wherefore comfort one another with these words”** (I Thess. 4:18).

The antidote for troubled hearts is faith: **“Ye believe in God, believe also in me.”** You believe God is faithful and true to His promise, though you have never seen Him. Then believe in Me also, though I am about to leave you for a while, Christ told them that the remedy for their troubled hearts was a strong faith in Him. When we are troubled in spirit our faith in God and Christ should remain unshaken.

The words: **“Ye believe in God, believe also in me”** are full proof of the true deity of Christ since He is represented as equally the object of faith with God the Father. The word **“believe”** occurs twice in this expression in the same sense, demanding the same trust in Jesus Christ as in God the Father. Elsewhere faith in Christ is made equal to faith in God (John 5:24; 12:44). There is an indissoluble union between Christ and God the Father (John 10:30).

CONCLUSION

1. The Rapture is only for true believers. This is seen in John 14:1 and John 11:25-26. In John 11:25 there is seen the resurrection of

a dead believer: **“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.”** In verse 26 there is the translation of a living believer: **“And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”** The message about the Rapture in I Thessalonians 4:13-18 concerns only those who **“believe that Jesus died and rose again”** (I Thess. 4:14), or those who believe the gospel of Christ. Those raised from the dead are **“the dead in Christ”** (I Thess. 4:16). Nothing is said about those out of Christ being in this resurrection.

2. In John 14:1-3 we see Christ's relation to Heaven: **“In my Father's house are many mansions.”** It is the Father's dwelling place and the scene of family life. Second, Christ is said to prepare man's Heaven: **“I go to prepare a place for you.”** Third, Christ will introduce man to Heaven: **“I will come again, and receive you unto myself.”** Fourth, Christ constitutes Heaven for man: **“ . . . that where I am, there ye may be also.”** Heaven would be an unready place for a Christian if Christ were not there. This would make Heaven Hell!

3. There will be no empty mansions in Heaven. Christ would not build and furnish a mansion and let it stand empty for all eternity! He will finish what He has started. If He prepares a place for us, He will prepare us for the place, and, in due time, He will take us to the prepared place. Falling from grace is not in this text, for at the Rapture Christ is coming to receive all for whom He has prepared a place. Is He preparing a place for you? Does He have any place in your life? Do you believe in Him?



BEREA BAPTIST BANNER

Financial Report

12-1-2016 to 12-31-2016

Beginning Balance	\$2,183.97
RECEIPTS:	
Amazing Grace B. C., Stockdale, TX	50.00
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	300.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL	60.00
Berea M. B. C., Mansfield, OH	600.00
Bethel B. C., Pasadena, TX	50.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne, WV	313.45
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	300.00
Carol Willett, Edgewater, FL	50.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL	25.00
Gail Knowles, Portland, ME	20.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	300.00
Grace B. C., Rual Hall, NC	50.00
Grace M. B. C., Marion, IL	50.00
Grace M B. C., Tulsa, OK	35.00
Harry Polston, Monroe, WA	5.00
Helen Strum, Ashland, KY	100.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV	100.00
The Lord's Church, Goose Creek, SC	100.00
Michael Sherman, Ashland, KY	35.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH	100.00
New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN	50.00
Parkway Landmark B. C., Springfield, OR	200.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL	100.00
Portland B. C., Plumerville, AR	50.00
Southside B. C., Fulton, MS	25.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Northport, AL	100.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA	25.00
Subscriptions	31.00
Anonymous	725.00
Dividing checks	350.00
Sub Total	\$4,299.45
TOTAL	\$6,483.42
EXPENDITURES:	
Printing	490.00
Postage	1,053.32
Wages	2,300.00
FICA	175.96
Dividing checks	350.00
Total Expenditures	\$4,369.28
ENDING BALANCE	\$2,114.14



BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST

Financial Report

12-1-2016 to 12-31-2016

Beginning Balance	\$6,112.38
RECEIPTS:	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	225.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	200.00
Calvary I. B. C., Sumas, WA	100.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	300.00
.....	825.00
TOTAL	6,937.38
EXPENDITURES:	
Radio Time	603.98
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	603.98
.....	6,333.40
Interest	+0.05
ENDING BALANCE	\$6,333.45

The Short Pews



Brief
Articles
by Curtis
Pugh

ABUSING THE BIBLE

There are a number of reasons for the disagreements among professing Christians. Traditional teachings are sometimes believed instead of the Bible. Not knowing Bible customs, not knowing the meaning of words both English and in the original Bible languages also contribute to these differences. Not considering all that the Bible has to say on a subject may also contribute. Of course those who somehow claim to be followers of the Lamb but who do not believe the Bible will put forth their own ideas.

There is a warning in the Bible regarding our mistreatment of the Scriptures. It is possible to abuse God's Book. It is possible to twist and torture it so as to make it say what it does not really say. Let us begin in the middle of one of Peter's statements about Paul: **".. our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;**

As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction" (II Peter 3:15-16).

Peter admits that Paul wrote some things hard to be understood, but that he had been given the wisdom by which he wrote: given it from God, of course. He also wrote that Paul wrote of such things in all his letters so we conclude they must have been of major importance. Peter also equated Paul's writings with **"the other scriptures"** meaning Paul's letters were the Word of God just like the Old Testament and other New Testament writings. He also named two kinds of people who abuse all the Scriptures: those who are **"unlearned"** and those who are **"unstable."**

Peter said these people **"wrest"** the Scriptures **"unto their own destruction."** By twisting or torturing the meaning of words and terms it is possible to make the Bible say most anything. By putting Scriptures together that are unrelated it is possible to do the same thing. For instance: the Bible says Judas **"went and hanged himself."** And in another place Jesus said, **"Go, and do thou likewise."**

Of course these two quotations are totally unrelated, but in a ridiculous way they illustrate one way the Bible can be twisted. So also many people take Old Testament promises made to National Israel and claim they are true for Christians or for Christ's congregations today. But National Israel is one thing and Christians and congregations of them are completely different and not to be confused. Old Testament promises made to Israel cannot rightly be claimed by citizens of the United States or any other people except those addressed.

In abusing the Bible there is a danger: a danger of personal **"destruction:"** a danger of perishing, of ruin, of perdition! Oh how important it is that we study the Scriptures carefully and without prejudice allowing them to say what they say. Do not **"wrest"** the Bible to your **"destruction!"**



ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Landmark Baptist Church in Moncks Corner, South Carolina, is without a pastor. The members of this local New Testament church would like to make a request to pastors and members of other New Testament churches: do you have a man in your membership that believes the Lord is calling him to the ministry, and if so, would he consider relocating to this area and work in the church here teaching the truth of God's Word? It is our prayer that the Lord will send as He did in the church at Antioch. Even though we are without a pastor, we would carefully consider the one who the Lord God sends as pastor after the church has observed areas of qualification that are mentioned in First Timothy 3. For answers to questions you may have, please

contact Brother Andrew Cook at acook1947@gmail.com.

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.

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.

The Faith Missionary Baptist Church of Cobbitty, South Wales, Australia is in need of a pastor. For more information please contact David Jackson at 4 Station Street, Thirlmere, NSW 2572, Australia or Email: shellie45@bigpond.com.au.

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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NOTICE!

The Berea Baptist Broadcast can now be heard in the Bristol, Kingsport, and Colonial Heights areas in northeast Tennessee, as well as in the areas close to there in Kentucky, Virginia, and North Carolina. See the radio log on page two for station details.