

In My Time of Devotion Volume II.

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Relativism...

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.com)

His name is John G. Stackhouse, Jr. His book is entitled, *Humble Apologetics Defending the Faith Today* (Oxford University Press, 2002). And his message is loud and clear. Christianity will hold up to any religion, but what's the point if I win the argument for faith in Christ and fail to demonstrate the very humility of Christ in my defense? In other words, I can win the argument but lose the endorsement—"I don't care that you answered all my questions, your arrogance is repulsive."

Dr. Stackhouse's call for humility in apologetics is well made; however, I'd like to comment on his words about *relativism*. If you are my age (51) or older, you might remember Ray Stevens' song from 1970 entitled, "Everything is Beautiful." After the song's opening Refrain, Stevens sings these words, "There is none so blind as he who will not see. We must not close our minds, we must let our thoughts be free." I have no disrespect for Mr. Stevens, but everything in life is not beautiful. Some things, even religions, can be ugly. For example, any religion that condones the beheading of infidels is ugly and cannot be labeled "beautiful"—thrown into the same mix of religions that seek truth and peace.

In chapter one of his book, Dr. Stackhouse quotes Allan Bloom who writes, "There is one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of: almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative... The students' backgrounds are as various as America can provide. Some are religious, some atheists; some are to the Left, some to the Right; some intend to be scientists, some humanists or professionals or businessmen; some are poor, some rich. They are unified only in their relativism and in their allegiance to equality..."

"Relativism is necessary to openness; and this is the virtue, the only virtue, which all primary education for more than fifty years has dedicated itself to inculcating. Openness... is the great insight of our times. The true believer is the real danger. The study of history and our culture teaches that the entire world was mad in the past; men always thought they were right, and that led to wars, persecutions, slavery, xenophobia, racism, and chauvinism. The point is not to correct the mistakes and really be right; rather it is not to think you are right at all."

America, certainly at the University level and in politics, has become a society that prefers the radical notion that everything and everyone is right and never wrong, for fear that a value statement might be made and offend someone's group. (Lord help us please.) Again Dr. Stackhouse writes, "In introductory religion courses, many frequently opine that the way this or

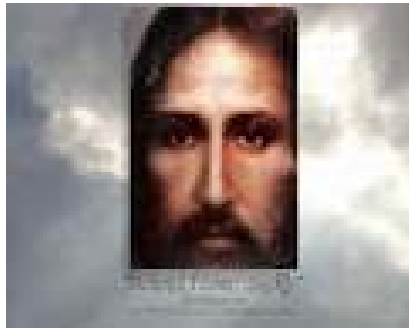
that religion treats women appalls them. Yet in the very next paragraph of an essay, such students commonly switch back with what they intend to be a relativistic judgment, namely, that they would probably agree with that religion's understanding of gender if they had been raised in it. This latter admission seems to imply that the students' disgust toward what they judge to be sexism is nothing more than an effect of their particular upbringing. Morality, in sum, is nothing more than a social construction and not reflective of any objective moral order that lies beyond any person's or any civilization's preference."

My I ask you a question? Do you believe that everything in life is relative? If you do, then you must believe that there may be many answers to the equation— $2 + 2 = (4)$ and that Nazism is as "good" as Judaism. If I like the color blue and you like red, neither one of us is wrong because of our choice. It's a matter of taste. And tastes are subjective. But in the case of mathematics (and God's Law), there is objective truth. There can only be one final answer.

In closing this piece, I must say this. It's very tempting to embrace the "feel good" message of Ray Stevens' song, but in truth not everything in comparison is beautiful.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is truly beautiful and coming again to set the record straight, objectively.

Pastor T.



Beacon of Hope



Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

Having served in the US Navy makes me appreciate the picture above. The lighthouse is, among other things, a warning to sea going vessels within the illumination of its beacon of potential dangers. To the one alerted by its light, it is the difference between staying afloat or wrecking on a reef or rocky bottom.

When I think about it, a lighthouse meant very little to me growing up in Oklahoma. It wasn't until I joined the service and headed out to sea that it became meaningful. At sea the lighthouse took on a more valuable meaning. Why? *Its reality changed for me.* In other words, before my sea travels it was surreal, ephemeral, and only visible in art form. But at sea it was life-like, physical, and helpful. At sea it became an *experience.* I knew it was real because my eyes had seen it. It was there, even when I wasn't in close proximity to see its light. It was there doing its job—always working, whether it was needed or not.

It has been over 32 years since I joined the Navy. Many things have changed in my life. I no longer spend months at sea. As a matter of fact, I seldom travel to the ocean. This is not because I dislike the sea. I'm just wrapped up in other things. Now my sea going experiences are through imaginations and pictures. (One of the most treasured pieces of art I have is a sketch of a lighthouse that my daughter sketched and presented to me as a birthday gift. Each time I reflect on its beauty, I remember the fragrance of the ocean waters, the sound of the waves slapping

against the rocks on shore, and the perpetual winds, whistling in my ears. And there is something else I'm reminded of. I'm reminded of *the steadfast Love of Jesus.*)

Jesus is the beacon of my soul. He's always there whether I call on Him or not, brilliant in His glory, and arrayed in penetrating Light. What more can I say about Jesus? He stands as a warning against sin's danger and destruction. He's always standing on a hill or raised platform above the rocky shores of life. Why is He positioned in front and above me? He does this because I don't always look for Him. Sadly I admit that I sometimes ignore Him. So He must position Himself above me to get my attention. But, this He does gladly because He loves me.

Yes, He loves you too. Even when you and I are unlovable He loves still loves us. I don't know why He loves us. He just does. The Bible says that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. That's love.



Jesus has been my experience for many years. Jesus is not simply a name in a book. He's not a portrait. He's not fable, nor fiction. Jesus is real and experienced because He's alive. Yes, this living Jesus is truly my lighthouse. He shelters me in the storms of life. He calls to me, and I hear His voice. I worship Him, and I call Him the Light of the world. How about you? Have you needed a lighthouse lately? Jesus can fill that need. Come into the Light and see!

Pastor T.



Is it possible to appease evil?

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Neville Chamberlain in 1938 tried to appease Hitler, but *Hitler would not be appeased*. You see, 1938 was a terrible time for Europe. Hitler's Nazis were running through sovereign nations like a hot knife through butter. England and its European allies were deeply alarmed, to say the least, and they hoped to negotiate peace with Hitler without having to go to war against him. Chamberlain the Prime Minister of England flew to Munich to meet with Hitler.

From this meeting comes the Munich Agreement which effectively allows Adolf Hitler to annex Czechoslovakia (I guess the Czechs were suppose to like the agreement or lump it). Chamberlain's belief that satisfying each of Hitler's escalating demands for control of more and more territory could be appeased was naïve. So, the Prime Minister flies home and meets the British press on his arrival. Holding up a piece of paper for all to see, Chamberlain cries out, "We've achieved peace in our times." One year later, Hitler invades Poland and the Munich Agreement is now worth no more than the paper it's written on. England is forced to declare war on Hitler, and Chamberlain falls to Winston Churchill. ***Hitler could not be appeased.***

Someone real smart once said that those who fail to learn the hard lessons of history are doomed to repeat them. I'll give you a modern day example. Obviously modern Europe has not learned the lessons of Chamberlain's appeasement policies because they are turning a deaf ear to Iran's nuclear weapons capabilities and saber rattling against Israel and the West in general. Iran is boasting of her ability to strike Israel with nuclear weapons and no one is denouncing them but the United States. I guess the Europeans think to do so would be promoting a policy of "preemption" and that is evil. (One of the major problems of America's war with Iraq—according to many Europeans—is America's preemptive policies toward

terrorists.) I believe that very soon—within the next couple of years—Iran and Israel will be at war. I also believe that Iran will use nuclear weapons against Israel. Could we be close to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ?

What does the Bible say about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ? It says more about His return than it does about His first coming. Even the Old Testament prophets spoke about the restoration of the nation Israel and the Messiah's Kingly rule from Jerusalem over all the earth. In John's Gospel chapter 14 and beginning with verse one it says: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. (2) 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. (3) 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" (KJV).

Often Jesus denounced the religious people of His day because they could predict the weather by reading the signs in the atmosphere, but they were ignorant regarding the prophetic words of His first and second comings. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus was quick to point out that His Second Coming would be announced by signs. He said that when wars escalate, extreme weather patterns prevail, pestilence destroys thousands, earthquakes are common, stars fall from the heavens, and the sun turns dark, then we are to know that Jesus is near even at the door. Now I've never been much of a "star gazer" but recently something keeps prompting me to look up. I believe that the Holy Spirit is directing me to stay alert to the signs of the times because spiritual lethargy in this hour would dull my senses to the sudden coming of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And I certainly don't want that to happen. What about you?

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming again! Stay ready.

Pastor T.



A Greater Navy

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Roughly 300 years before Christ was born, Rome and Carthage were at war with each other for control of the Mediterranean Sea. Between 264 and 146 B.C., they fought three wars. The first Punic War (264-241 B.C.), called Punic Wars because *Punici* was the Roman word for Phoenicians, was fought over control of the island of Sicily. The Romans feared a strong presence of Phoenicians on the island would disrupt the balance of trade in the Mediterranean Sea. The only way Rome could stop Carthage was to break her naval supremacy.¹

Using the design of a captured Carthaginian warship, Rome began to build a navy of her own. Although Rome soon possessed the same ships, Roman sailors could not match the experience and skill of the Carthaginians. So Rome substituted soldiers for experienced sailors. When an enemy ship came near, a plank was dropped (like a drawbridge) so that its spiked tip fastened to the deck of the enemy's ship. Armed Roman soldiers then crossed over and captured the ship. By this method Rome crippled the navy of Carthage.²

What if Rome had continued—although being subdued at every turn—trying to fight the Carthaginian navy without using their wits and capitalizing on their army's strength? The Roman Republic would have certainly died out, and North Africa would have become a world empire. This begs the question. What is insanity? It is doing the same thing over and over again but each time expecting different results. Can you identify with this definition?

If you find yourself defeated in life, while attempting to address the defeat and depression by the same actions day-in-and-day-out, maybe it's time to muster up the courage and try something different. I know trying something different may disrupt your comfort zone and stretch you beyond yourself, but isn't it worth a try? To win the Mediterranean Sea, the Romans were willing to try something different in their approach to naval warfare. Because they thought "outside the box" and applied their greatest asset to the situation, Rome went on to become a world empire.

Have you done an assessment of your greatest strengths lately? Why not? You need to know your strengths in order to address the enemies of life. The Bible says that God has given us all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus His only begotten Son. If you want to walk blessed, you must turn to Christ because in Him alone is everything you need. He is our greatest strength. Again the Bible says that all the promises of God are in Christ, yes and Amen! That means that Jesus is the mediator between God and man. If you want what God has for you, you must go to the Son. The Bible

¹ David A. Fisher, *World History for Christian Schools* (Greenville: Bob Jones University Press, 1984), pp. 83-84.

² *Ibid.*, p. 84.

says that we can do all things through Christ who is our strength. Are you getting the picture?

Many times we find ourselves in situations over our heads. We keep trying to press against them in our own strength and creativity. After a while we become exhausted because we are no match for the opposition. To continue striking the situation in human strength alone is insanity because each time we are doing the same actions but expecting different results. Why not try something ingenious? Why not cast the situation on God, and let Him help? God is for us and wants us to win. But He can't help us if we don't ask for His help. I believe that God has a way for you. I believe that He wants to break you out of your defeat and depression. I believe that if you call on Him, He will hear you and help you win.

God might have a special word of instruction for you that will help you overcome your enemy by an ingenious plan that capitalizes on your strengths and exploits the power of your enemy. Can you believe this? If so, go for it. Rome did.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is alive and coming again.

Pastor T.



Hodgepodge thoughts regarding Justice

Terry Dashner (www'ffcba.org)

I think you will agree with me that Hitler and his Nazi party stand out as one of the most repugnant memories in the annals of history. The question I raise is this: Were the nations that condemned the Nazis at the Nuremberg trials justified in rendering justice? Now before you question my sanity, please read the following lines patiently. If positive law philosophy and macroevolution (theory that holds to the idea that all varieties of life forms emanated from a single cell or "common ancestor.") are the highest law by which to bring condemnation upon another human being or sovereign nation, then all sovereign nations have the right to do good or do evil, and no other sovereign nation can hold the other accountable for its perceived crimes. Follow me. This gets clearer.

As social Darwinism and nationalism merged in Germany during the early twentieth century, the concept of fostering a genetically superior race called the *Volk* (the people) was established. The idea of the Volk was extended to various biological analogies, shaped by the contemporary beliefs of heredity, and designed to protect Germany from ‘racial inferiority.’ The German’s were trying to perfect *eugenics*, the science that investigates methods involving the betterment of the genetic composition of the human race. (In this case the Aryan race.) One of their goals was to eliminate the ‘inferior’ races and offspring and preserve the ‘better’ progeny. (This method is perfectly consistent with macroevolution and central principle, the survival of the fittest.)³ Nazi Germany figured if they could win the war and purge the world of Jews and other undesirables, they could rule the world as a “revived Roman Empire” to last a thousand years.

Again I ask you: Can America, or any other country, charge German officials with crimes against humanity? Especially since Germany felt it had a national obligation to achieve genetic purity?⁴ The research being conducted at the death camps was in accordance with Nazi law, and Nazi law defined what was right and just—in a word, what was *legal*. Dr. Geisler, in his book that he co-authored with Peter Bocchino entitled, *Unshakable Foundations* (Bethany House), makes a sobering and poignant comment that’s worth repeating here. He writes, “As long as naturalistic macroevolution and positive law are the dominating scientific and legal viewpoints both in theory (education) and in practice (law), we run the risk of returning to one of the darkest eras in the history of the human race.” *If we continue teaching our children that the law of the state is the highest law in the universe, and man is simply a product of natural selection, then we are doomed to repeat the evils of the past.*

I believe that national governments of all countries are responsible to God and its citizens to discover and protect human rights. However, positive law proponents disagree. They believe that nations and their governments **create** laws. In light of history, this is a dangerous philosophy to embrace. Accountability, according to the Bible, is first to God and then to the state. God ordained human governments to maintain order throughout the world. Citizens are to abide by the laws of

³ Norman Geisler and Peter Bocchino, *Unshakable Foundations*, (Bethany House) p. 210.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 210

the land; however when a man's law supersedes God's law, God's people must resist it with all their might.

I conclude this "hodgepodge" of thoughts with a quote from Thomas Jefferson. He said, "God who gave us life, gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation remain secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God? Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that his justice cannot sleep forever."

Pastor T.



Hodgepodge of Thoughts: *LOGIC*

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In this document I'm going to write down some of my thoughts regarding some basic truths about our Christian faith. Some of these thoughts will be pithy and to the point; others will be longer in explanation with more questions raised than questions answered. I do this to get you to thinking about your faith. Your faith in God, I think, is primary to living. I hope you agree. Let's get started.

I begin with a few words about *logic*. Alexander Pope is credited with saying that a little bit of knowledge is a dangerous thing. This cliché is fitting when you consider the role that human logic plays in learning. Logic is essential to understanding arguments, debates, and reasoning; however, logic has its limitations. Logic should be used to find error alone. You might say that logic's main function is to correct faulty thinking, or groundless reasoning. *It is a negative test for truth*. Logic by itself will not help us find truth but will only help us detect error.

What is true must be logical, but what is logical is not necessarily true. For example, one plus one equals two. This is a *logical* statement, and a *true* statement. On the other hand, one

fairy-god mother plus one fairy-god mother equals two fairy-god mothers. This statement is *logical*, but it is *not true* (sorry, children). Christianity is unique from all other religions. No other religion claims that its founder died, was buried, and in three days was raised from the dead. Only Christianity makes this claim. Can this claim be presented within the rules of logic and validated as true?

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ if it is true, must be logical. It cannot be true if it defies the rules of logic. On the other hand, if it can be explained logically and its truth established by critical means, then it must be acknowledged as a true event in history. *The Resurrection is valid because it meets all the criteria that any court of law would require to render its verdict.* For example, Christ said that the prophets before Him foretold of His death, burial, and resurrection. If this is true, then his Resurrection had to happen exactly like it was forecast by the Old Testament prophets. Amazingly, it did. This is already an established fact among Bible scholars. This is an important piece of evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

There is more evidence in support of the Resurrection. The fact that over 500 witnesses saw Jesus alive after his death is an important piece of evidence. When the Apostle Paul wrote this, there were still many of the Resurrection eyewitnesses still alive who could have been interviewed and could have been cross-examined. Also, the fact that Jesus' disciples were radically changed from a state of anxiety, hiding behind locked doors in fear to become outspoken preachers for Christ—this happening immediately after their claiming to have seen Jesus alive—is also important evidence. The fact that a handful of uneducated disciples successfully spread Christianity across the Roman Empire, facing hardships, even torture and death to eventually win over the Roman Empire is very important evidence. These are just a few of the facts that logically validate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. If the Resurrection can stand on its own merits, then the world must acknowledge it as true.

What say you? The Resurrection is the focal point of Christianity. That's why it is repeatedly under attack by its opponents. If the Resurrection is a hoax, then there is no Christian faith. It is a historical fact that Jesus died. It is also reasonably argued—supported by evidence—that Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus overcame death for all. Therefore, physical death can not hold the believer in a grave. One day dead Christians in cemeteries across the world will come out of the

grave just like Christ did. The resurrected body of a believer will be like the Resurrected body of Jesus. And the raised saints will live forever with Him.

There is much, much more to this topic, as most of you reading this know. I can't possibly exhaust 2000 years of research, and record it in this paper. I simply wanted to state the topic in light of logic to get you to thinking about the centrality of the Resurrection of Christ. I close with this scripture: Romans 8: 11 "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." Christian, you're a living powerhouse of authority—walk that way.

Pastor T.



Hodgepodge Truth: Does Absolute Truth Exist?

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

All men want to find truth, or so thought Aristotle. He said that philosophy begins with the desire to know truth. I agree that men want to find truth; however, not all men agree on what truth is. To one truth is relative, existing in one's own mind only. To another truth is elusive and can't really be understood, except in a metaphysical sense. (Metaphysical is a fancy word used by philosophers and theologians. It is concerned with issues such as the existence and nature of God. That's heavy. But let me get back to truth.)

Someone has said that a straight steel rod immersed in a glass of water may look as though it's bent, but it isn't. So appearances can be deceiving, can't they? Keep that illustration in mind while reading this paper for this reason: If it's easy to misperceive the true nature of physical things, then it can be

easy to misperceive metaphysical things. Now I'm going to drop another "heavy" on you. *To deny the existence of truth is to affirm its existence—truth is inescapable! Therefore, the affirmation that true statements can be made about reality is a rationally justifiable one.*⁵ For example if I say that truth does not exist, I'm purporting my belief to be true. And if I believe that my statement is true—truth does not exist—I'm banking on it being true. Using this logic my argument goes no place. I've just canceled out my statement by asserting what I believe to be true; nothing is true. (Keep scratching your head. This gets clearer as it goes along. I hope.)

I want to write a little bit about relativism. A relative view of truth has been deeply ingrained into the minds and hearts of contemporary people, especially in academic circles. Relativistic thinking has influenced us so much that it is now considered anti-intellectual to believe in absolute truth. The majority of educators and students regard truth to be obsolete, not absolute. Of course you know, as a Christian, that relativism has no place in the church house. A Christian's belief in God is not based on relative truths. God's truth, the Word, is absolute truth.

Now being the tolerant and wise person that you are, you may be thinking this: In light of tolerance what value is there in believing in absolutes? There is much value. Think about this: You may tolerate different tastes, but you can't tolerate relative truth as a child of God. Does that make sense? As a firm believer in Jesus Christ, you may and you should tolerate different cultures, different ideas, different philosophies about religion, different political parties, different races of people, but you can not compromise the fact that Jesus, Himself, said that *He is the ONLY way, truth, and life.*

You may remember the story about the six blind men who felt different parts of an elephant. In describing the elephant, each told about his part of the elephant. Each was telling the truth, but each description alone did not paint the entire picture. They each had a part of the whole, and the part did not adequately explain the whole. Granted, Christians do not all agree on every stated topic in the Bible; however, Christians do have a consensus on Jesus. He is what He said He is—the only begotten Son of God. The Bible says that believers see through a "glass darkly." That means that the understanding we now have can only be fully understood in the life that is to come. So,

⁵ Norman Geisler and Peter Bocchino, *Unshakable Foundations*, (Bethany House) pp. 32-33.

Christians should not boast arrogantly that they know everything there is to know about Christianity or the Bible. It just isn't true. Christians should stand humbly in the truth that has been revealed to them by the Spirit of God, and win others to the absolute truth about Jesus: He is the way, the truth, and the life. This must be done with a loving heart for all mankind.

If there are no absolutes in this world then $2+2=12$ or 6 or 8 or whatever it wants to equal—this is a child's dream. If mathematics is relative, then a math student may use any answer he or she pleases. If there are no absolutes in this world, then why do we hold criminals accountable for wrongdoing? Why do we tell our children not to lie to us? How will they know what is a lie, and what is truth? There has to be absolute standards because there are absolute truths. God's laws are absolute and universal. Honest—they are. I certainly wouldn't lie to you about that!

Pastor T.



A Dispensation of Grace...

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Some scriptures in the OT that seem to imply that salvation comes through the Mosaic Law are Lev. 18:5, Duet. 4:1, 8; 27:26; and 28:58-59.

But, the NT is clear that salvation is and has always been by faith (Romans 4:3).

Genesis 15: 6 is the first passage that provides a clear explanation of the means of salvation in the OT. This is Abraham's response to God's covenant with him—**he believed...**

Salvation came to the nation Israel when the blood of the lambs was applied to the door of their homes in Egypt, the night of their deliverance from bondage. The Law was given to them on Mount Sinai in Exodus 20—after their deliverance but before their occupation of the Promised Land.

In short, God is addressing His laws to a covenant, believing nation, giving no indication that salvation is in view. The law presents Moses and the redeemed people with their responsibilities as a theocratic nation under God; obedience to the commandments will bring physical blessing and long life.

What was the purpose of the Mosaic Law? It demonstrated God's goodness to Israel-Deut. 7:7-8. The fact that God had given Israel a set of guidelines for the affairs of life, such as government and worship, constantly reminded them of God's concern for them as his special nation. It was God's grace that saved Israel, and raised her up as a unique benefactor of God. To walk in obedience to the Law brought Israel a rich homeland (Duet. 7:13) the prevention of illness and disease (v. 15) and victory over their enemies (v. 16).

The Israelites were called by God to be a nation of that is holy, a kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:6). Thus, the law defined the responsibility of the covenant nation to God, marking out the requirement for fellowship and communion with him. It gave specific instructions to them concerning appropriate behavior within the covenant relationship. Disobedience to the law did not remove them from the coveted covenant relationship, for that relationship depended on God's faithfulness. However, disobedience did affect the enjoyment of the blessings attendant to salvation. The consequences for disobedience to the law are not stated in terms of eternal condemnation, but rather in terms of physical, temporal punishment (Duet. 28:58-62)

So, in summary the OT stated that the law was designed to show the graciousness of God, validate his blessing on saved Israel, and explain how to live the life of faith and to please God. Paul throws us a curve ball when relating the significance of the law to the church. What did he say?

For one, Paul says the law was given to expose sin.—the reality of sin (Romans 3:20)—the sinfulness of sin 7:7—and the guilt associated with sin (3:19; Gal 3:22; Col. 2:14). The concern with Paul's reference to law is this. Sometimes he refers to the entire OT as the law. Sometimes he refers to the Mosaic Law only as the Law. Others say Paul goes even narrower, referring to the Law as the Ten Commandments only.

I Timothy 1:8-9 seem to say that the law has a purpose to the church age if used lawfully, but not in sanctification, according to verse 9.

Secondly, the Mosaic Law was a tutor. Galatians 3:23-26. Is Paul merely denouncing legalism when he disparages the law? Paul is not contrasting law and grace but legalism of the religious and grace.

NOMOS Greek for law was used in three ways by Paul. 1-used for the OT as a whole. 2-used nomos as the general principle of law. 3-used to refer to the Mosaic dispensation.

Romans 10:5-8 problems. Paul merely gives clarity to the revelation of God to Moses that the righteousness of the law was operable during Moses' lifetime, but that a future time would see righteousness based on faith. In Paul's mind there was a contrast between the righteousness based on law and the righteousness based on faith. The end of the law of righteousness came with Jesus Christ. Faith righteousness is now in operation by faith.

Was Paul concerned with the Pharisaic misunderstandings of the law, or the misapplication of the law? If the law principle was ended, it would be natural for Paul to be concerned about any suggestion that Christians were obligated to obey the law.

Pastor T.



God sees it before it gets here...

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

Scientists at the Goddard Space Flight Center reported not long ago that one of the largest stars in our galaxy is about to self-destruct.

Eta Carinae, which has a mass 100 times greater than that of our sun, is giving signs that its life is about over. Researchers say that it could become a supernova—a blazing, exploding star—within the next 10,000 years. What was especially interesting about the Science 81 report was the statement that since light from the star takes 9,000 years to reach the earth, the actual explosion could have already taken place.

This striking fact reminds me of the nature of biblical prophecy. For example, the predictions found in Revelation 8 are often written in the past tense. This is done because even though the prophet is writing of a future event, he has already “seen” it. Also, in the mind of God it's as if the events have already happened.

Even though Christians differ on the interpretation of today's Scripture, we can definitely say that God's judgment of those who continually resist Him is so sure that it has been written about in the past tense. This should cause us to reflect with the apostle Peter, who wrote so appropriately, "Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness?" (2 Peter 3:11). As Christians, we know what's ahead for this world, and that knowledge should keep us living close to God.

Our Daily Bread, June 26 http://www.bible.org/illus.asp?topic_id=1190

If I flip a quarter into the air, I have a 1 in 75,000,000 chance that it will turn up heads 26 times in a row. That's the same odds that Ezekiel's prophecy regarding the ancient city of Tyre (Ezekiel 26-28) is false. What are the chances that Ezekiel could have made these predictions out of his own head?

1. That Nebuchadnezzar would conquer the city of Tyre.
2. That other nations would contribute to its total demise.
3. That the city would be made flat like a rock. (Tells)
4. It would become a place for the spreading of nets.
5. Its stones and timbers would be placed in the sea.
6. That other cities would fear greatly at the news of the fall.
7. That the original city would never be rebuilt.
8. It has been conservatively estimated that the chances are about one in 75,000,000.

History proves him amazingly accurate.

Ezekiel predicted in the 6th century B.C. that God had promised to destroy the powerful city of Tyre, on the Mediterranean coast. Ezekiel wrote, ". . . the Sovereign Lord says: I am your enemy, O Tyre, and I will bring many nations against you, like the waves of the sea crashing against your shoreline. They will destroy the walls of Tyre and tear down its towers. They will destroy your lovely homes and dump your stones and timbers and even your dust into the sea" (Ezekiel 26:3-6, 12, NLT).

Within a few years of that prophecy, Babylon, under Nebuchadnezzar, became the first of "many nations" to besiege Tyre. During Nebuchadnezzar's thirteen-year siege of the mainland city, Tyre's rulers and residents moved their city—lock, stock, and barrel—to an island that stood one-half mile offshore! Nebuchadnezzar eventually conquered the mostly-deserted mainland city, destroying its walls and tearing down its towers, as Ezekiel had written. Three hundred years later, Alexander the Great besieged the island city of Tyre. When the occupants refused to surrender, Alexander had his army build a causeway to the island, by dumping the stones and timbers and dust of the former mainland city into

the sea, just as Ezekiel had prophesied!
www.godspeaks.com/WIG/WIG03T10.asp

What does history tell us?

Three years after this prophesy Nebuchadnezzar began the siege of Tyre in 586 B.C:

The people of Tyre were known as the Phoenicians. The Phoenician navy ruled the seas from the 12th to the 6th century B.C.

Tyre was a very wealthy city as a result of the merchant ships that traveled throughout the entire Mediterranean and even as far as England.

The siege lasted for thirteen years and Tyre was finally conquered.

During the siege the people of Tyre fortified an island that was a half mile off shore, and gradually moved the wealth and goods of the city to the island fortress, so that by the time the city fell to the Babylonians, most of the people had moved to the new city, and all of the wealth had been transferred there, thus Nebuchadnezzar did not spoil the wealth of the city, but in revenge ravaged the walls of the city to the ground.

The new city of Tyre continued to prosper from the new island location which was greatly fortified and the walls extending out into the sea to protect the port.

Alexander the Great enters...

241 years after Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed the old city of Tyre, Alexander the Great began his conquest of the ancient world.

1. His ambition was to capture the Persian Empire and to gain its vast wealth.
2. Before he began his march against Persia, he decided to head south and conquer Tyre, fearing that while his troops were in the East engaged in war, that the Phoenician navy may endeavor to invade Greece.
3. He came to Tyre and demanded that the city surrender which demand they refused.
4. He first attempted and failed to conquer the city by a assault from the sea in ships gathered from nearby ports.
5. It was then that he struck upon the idea of taking the rubble of the old city of Tyre left by Nebuchadnezzar and building a causeway out to the island.
6. The troops began placing the rocks and timbers in the

sea and covering the top with dirt that they might roll the engines of war upon the causeway built out to the island.

Great 7. When this causeway was completed, Alexander the personally led the troops over the wall into the city, and Tyre was taken.

8. The city was destroyed completely by Alexander as a warning to other cities that might seek to defy his demands of surrender.

9. Upon hearing of the fall of Tyre, many cities feared so much the power of Alexander that they opened their gates to the approaching army of Alexander, and surrendered without a fight.

Consider this...

For years even the site of the ancient city of Tyre was unknown, it had been so thoroughly destroyed. Less than two hundred years ago as a group of archeologists were watching some fishermen spreading their nets on the bare rocks to dry, one of them noticed that the rocks were not in a natural formation, and it was then realized that this peninsula they were on was not natural, but one formed by the siege of the island city of Tyre by Alexander and his forces.

The prophecies were literally fulfilled even to the present day. The modern city of Tyre is built nearby in another location. The ancient site is still barren rock, a place where the fishermen spread their nets. Seven times in this chapter the claim is made that the words spoken are from the Lord. This same claim is made in the Bible 866 times. This claim is either true or false. This is either God's word, or it is not God's word. All that is necessary to prove that the Bible is not the word of God is to prove it in error. If there were a great metropolis built on the site of the ancient city of Tyre today, we could all fold up our Bibles and go home dejected and in a hopeless condition. This incidentally would make an excellent site for a city, for the ancient springs of Resilen are still flowing there into the sea, an estimated 10,000,000 gallons of water a day. It was this abundance of fresh water that allowed the city of Tyre to hold out against Nebuchadnezzar for 13 years.

If the Bible is truly the word of God, what does that mean to us today?

It means:

- A. That God really did create you and loves you.
- B. That God wants you to know Him and to fellowship with Him.
- C. That God has a wonderful plan for your life, and your eternal

future.

- D. That God sent His only begotten Son into the world to die for the guilt of your sin, so that the barrier between you and God could be removed, and the way made whereby you could come to God.
- E. That if you today will just confess to Him your sins, He will be faithful and just to forgive you of all of your sins, and He will cleanse you from all unrighteousness.
- F. That you can live with Him forever in the perfect joy and glory of His presence.
- H. What are the chances that this is true? One in seventy five million in just one chapter alone.
- I. Look at the odds you are gambling against if you should choose not to believe the Bible as the word of God.
- J. I cannot understand why a person would not want to believe all of the glorious promises that God has made to man.

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What about other prophecies?

The most numerous and astounding prophecies of the Bible refer to the coming of Jesus, the Messiah of the Jews and Savior of the world. Scholars have catalogued more than sixty major messianic prophecies in the Old Testament that were fulfilled in Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection (with 270 parts or details that also had to be fulfilled). Micah predicted that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1). Zechariah predicted he would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9; Luke 19:35-37). The psalmist David predicted that his hands and feet would be pierced, centuries before crucifixion was even invented as a form of execution (Psalm 22:16; Luke 23:33). In fact, in just *one day twenty-nine* specific prophecies, each of them spoken at least five hundred years earlier, were fulfilled in Jesus.

The Bible also prophesied that on the third day after his death, the Messiah would be raised from the dead (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:31), ascend to heaven (Psalm 68:18; Acts 1:9), and be seated at the right hand of God in full majesty and authority (Psalm 110:1; Hebrews 1:3).

The odds of just eight of these prophecies being accidentally fulfilled in one person have been calculated at 1 in 10 to the 17th power (1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000)! An outrageous probability! Dr. Peter Stoner, former chairman of the departments of mathematics, astronomy, and engineering at Pasadena College, California, illustrated the odds this way: Imagine 100,000,000,000,000,000 silver dollars, an amount that would cover the face of the entire state of Texas to a depth of two feet. Then

imagine that one of those coins is marked. What are the chances that you could walk blindfolded into that Texas-sized pile of coins, stop only once somewhere between El Paso and Galveston, somewhere between Amarillo and Brownsville, and on your first try reach into that pile and pick out the single marked coin? Your chances would be one in 100,000,000,000,000,000, the same as supposing that only eight messianic prophecies could have been accidentally fulfilled in one person.

Now consider all two thousand (out of about 2,500) Bible prophecies that have so far been fulfilled. The likelihood of that occurring by accident has been calculated at less than 1 in 10 to the power of 2,000—that's 1 with *two thousand* zeros after it! Compare those odds to your odds of being struck by lightning (1 in 600,000). So the question to ask is: Is it easier to believe that the Bible is the true and infallible Word of God or that all those prophecies have been fulfilled *by a mind-boggling chain of coincidences and statistical impossibilities?*
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God has seen what is coming. Much of it is recorded in the Book of all books—the Bible. You can stake your life, even your future, on what the Lord has told us in scripture. But not only does His Word tell us what's coming, it tells us how to live today. How should we live? We should live in a loving relationship with Him through faith in His Son Jesus Christ by the power of His Holy Spirit. Jesus is given to us daily as our daily bread for living. Come to Jesus.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming soon.

Pastor T.



Draw a Line (B)

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.com)

On which side will you stand? You may stand on the Lord's side or the side of the world, but you cannot stand on both.

We continue our study regarding commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. The first lesson (Draw a Line) asked the question how does one know that he or she is standing on the side of the Lord. For one, he or she is still actively moved to action when hearing the Word of God. The heart is still sensitive to the message preached. Secondly, the believer offers his or her body as a living sacrifice first before offering anything else to the Lord. Everything we live, do, or think is to be a presentable offering unto the Lord.

Today we look at our **responsibilities** before the Lord that points to the sincerity of our commitment in His service.

First responsibilities include this: we are to faithfully execute our calling. Again, everyone who is in Christ is positioned in His body strategically. He called us, saved us, and placed us. If the body of believers is healthy, it is in unity and functioning in full movement. If the body is handicapped, it is because many in the body are refusing to carry their load of ministry.

Why would some not execute their calling? The list of excuses is endless, but some refuse to go forward because of the perceived difficulties. Many think that taking hold of their calling would carry them to places unknown, facing difficulties and challenges that might require their life. They're okay with their calling if it doesn't require much from them.

Recently I was reading through Ezekiel. In chapter three and verse eight I read these words again, "Behold, I have made your face as hard as their faces and your forehead as hard as their foreheads." After reading these words I began to think about Ezekiel's calling to Israel. It was not going to be an easy task. Israel had refused to hear Jeremiah. They had refused to hear God. And now God was sending Ezekiel with this assignment—go and speak to them, although they won't listen to you; nevertheless, go speak the Word of the Lord to them anyway. I'm sure Ezekiel's heart sank when he heard this commission for ministry.

God told Ezekiel that He was going to make his head as hard as theirs. What does that mean? I believe that God was making Ezekiel a mirror to reflect the attitude and condition of the people. When the people heard and saw Ezekiel, they were made to see the hardness of their own heart. And yet even seeing the hardness of their hearts, many refused to repent. Ezekiel had to be strong to continue this type of ministry. He saw very little results if any. It was bound to discourage him, so God made him tougher-than-boot-nails to endure his ministry (read Ezekiel 3:14).

There is a message here. If God calls you, He will equip you. If you will take hold of your responsibilities in the Lord and move out for His glory's sake, then God will go with you every step of the way. He will honor you

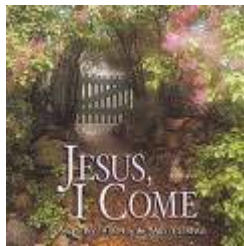
and reward you with His faithfulness. Remember, God has not called you to “get results.” He has called you to be faithful. The results belong to Him. That is His responsibility, not yours.

Secondly in regards to responsibilities before God, the believer must carry his own burden of ministry.

To be continued...

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming soon.

Pastor T.



Draw a Line (C)

Pastor Terry L. Dashner (www.ffcba.com)

This is the third and final paper regarding our study on drawing a line in the sand for Jesus. We stand on one side or the other. There is no neutral position in Christ. It's all for Him or nothing. You will stand for Jesus or fall with the world.

This last study concludes the topic on our responsibilities before God. If you are standing with Jesus, you will offer yourself first to God before you offer anything else. If you are standing in Christ, you will take up your calling and follow Jesus, no matter what the costs.

Today I want to share with you about bearing your own burden before the Lord. In Galatians 6:5 it reads, “For every man shall bear his own burden” (KJV).

Does this scripture contradict verse two of the same chapter? It reads, “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (KJV). Which is it? Are we to bear each other’s burden or are we to bear our own burden alone?

Consider this. In my study Bible there is a footnote attached to help explain the relationship of verse two to verse five. Essentially the meaning

is this. In verse two the Greek word for “burdens” is different from the Greek word in verse five translated, “burden.” In verse two the Greek word means a very heavy weight, and the Greek word in verse five means a light weight. So what gives?

Throughout our Christian walk, there will be times that we fall into circumstances that tax us, that burden us heavily. At that time, we can go to our brothers and sister in the Lord and pray and fellowship with each other. In this way we are helping one another bear our burden before the Lord. That’s why it is so important to stay in church and fellowship with other believers. On the other hand, as stated in verse five, there is a **burden** that the believer must bear alone. It is the calling to which God has called him. For example, God has called me to Gospel ministry. I must bear that burden before God. I can’t expect someone else to minister in my place. It is my responsibility before God to “pick up my cross” and follow Christ.

I believe the body of Christ is at a crossroads today. It’s a pivotal time in Christianity. Jesus is shaking everything that can be shaken. If you are not rooted and grounded in Jesus, you will be tossed about by the mighty wind of His Spirit that is coming soon upon the face of this world. It’s time to stand up for God!

Every Christian will go through times of downturn seasons. That is normal. And while you are in a downturn, the body of Christ will be there to help you bear the burden. When you come out of your downturn season, don’t forget God. Remember, you have an obligation before God and your Christian family to throw your might into the fight to help others who might be going through a downturn. Stay the course always.

Keep the faith. Jesus is coming soon. Pastor T.



The First Order of Things

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.com)

No one likes restraints. It is the nature of man to resist restrictions, rules, policies, and laws. Many people think that freedom is a life without restraints; however, a life free of all restraint would only enslave the one

who wanted freedom. One cannot live freely in a society where there is no rule of law. Law provides the guidelines for a safe and free community—a community that insures justice for the violated, protection for the weak, safeguards against the unruly, and the liberty of its citizens to pursue life without the fear of being victimized by evil men.

As a New Testament believer who has experienced God’s salvation by His grace alone, I’m very much aware that there are some Christians who find it difficult to reconcile the seemingly contradictions between the Mosaic Law and the Gospel of grace. I hope this brief study will help bridge the gap.

For starters when I refer to the Mosaic Law and its relationship to the Church of Jesus Christ, I’m referring solely to the Moral Law—The Ten Commandments. The Mosaic Law of the Old Testament dealt with the civil laws of the nation Israel, the ceremonial or religious liturgy of burnt offerings and animal sacrifices, and the Moral Law. Christians do not live under a Theocratic form of government; therefore, the civil Law of Moses is limited in its relationship to world governments. Jesus fulfilled the ceremonial law of burnt offerings and sacrifices; therefore, my righteousness before God is not in my liturgy but in Christ alone. Nevertheless, the Moral Law does speak to my Christian living.

One could never—not in Old Testament times or even now—receive God’s gift of salvation by adhering to The Ten Commandments. The way to God has and always will be by faith alone (Romans 5:1). According to Paul’s teaching in Galatians, Abraham was justified or made right before God because he “believed God.” In other words if the Patriarch of Israel was saved by faith, everyone who followed him in history would be saved by faith and not by keeping the Ten Commandments. The Law came hundreds of years after Abraham and had objectives that are too numerous to mention in this document. But, one thing for certain, no one has ever been made right before God because of keeping The Ten Commandments.

Nevertheless, the Moral Law of Moses (The Ten Commandments) does relate to the New Testament believer. How? For one, it tells us what God wants from us—to love Him with all our heart, soul, and mind; and to love each other as we love and care for ourselves. (The vertical relationship is God to man. The horizontal relationship is man to man. This forms the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the Cross of Jesus). Secondly, the Moral Law is the highest expression of a believer’s growth in Christ. As we grow in Christian maturity by the help of the Holy Spirit, our actions toward God and each other will be those that respect God’s preeminence and holiness, respect our parents, rest in the faith life, honor marriage between a man and a woman, respect a man’s personal property, and protect human life at all costs.

To be continued...



First Order (B)

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.com)

A continuation from “First Order of Things”

In Galatians 4:4-5 it says, “But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, (5) To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (KJV).

Simply stated, God’s timing is perfect. Jesus, God’s only begotten Son, was sent to earth when the Roman Empire was expanding, building roads, providing security for commerce, and bringing the rule of law and order throughout the Mediterranean.

Can you imagine what would have happened if Jesus had be sent another time, to another race of people other than the Jews? Yes, the Jews were subjected to Roman rule and were not a free people; but, the Jews were given certain privileges by the Romans that were not granted to other races of people at the time. For example, the Jews were not required to serve in the Roman army because of their strict adherence to dietary laws and Sabbath religious observances. The Jews would rather die at the hands of their enemies than defend themselves on the Sabbath day. Rome recognized this and allowed them the freedom to observe monotheism and their Mosaic Law.

God sent His Son among a race of people that had roots and moral foundations. He was not sent to the polytheistic Romans or the pagan Greeks but to the Jews who had ceremonial, civil, and moral laws embedded in their culture from centuries of religious observances of the one true God. One could say that the history of the Jewish nation was the history of the preparation for the coming of God into the world in a unique way in Jesus Christ (William Barclay, *The Ten Commandments*, Westminster John Knox Press 1998, p.1).

Jesus did not come into a society which knew nothing of goodness and of morality and of ethics and of God. He came into a society which, as the New Testament itself would put it, already possessed the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 5.17). The Jewish ethic, which was the foundation of the Christian Ethic, was itself founded on the Ten Commandments. But these Commandments might well be called the universal foundation, not only of Jewish ethics, but of all ethics. They contain the basic laws of human conduct in society, laws which are not so much particularly and exclusively Jewish, but which are the starting-point of life for all men who have agreed to live together in any community (Ibid., p.1).

Let's review them again.

- I. You shall not have other gods before (or besides) me.
- II. You shall not make for yourself a graven image.
- III. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
- IV. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.
- V. Honour your father and your mother.
- VI. You shall not kill.
- VII. You shall not commit adultery.
- VIII. You shall not steal.
- IX. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.
- X. You shall not covet (Ibid., pp.1-2).

To be continued...

Pastor T.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming soon.

First Order (C)

A continuation of "First Order (B)"

Terry Dashner www.fcb.com

When one reads The Ten Commandments, one sees a natural break midway through the reading. The first half-of-Commandments speak of what God requires from His creation. This is referred to as the "vertical" emphasis—God to man. The last half-of-Commandments speak of man's relationship to his neighbor. This is referred to as the "horizontal" emphasis—man to man. If the vertical Commandments are intersected by the horizontal Commandments, it forms a cross. Jesus died on the Cross to bridge the gap between God and man and to reconcile men to other men. Thus, Jesus lived, died and fulfilled The Ten Commandments.

William Barclay has said, “No man dare say that he loves God, unless he also loves his fellowmen; and no man can really and truly love his fellowmen, unless he sees that the true value of a man lies in the fact that he is a child of God. Without the manward look religion can become a remote and detached mysticism in which a man is concerned with his own soul and his own vision of God and nothing more. Without the Godward look a society can become a place in which, as in a totalitarian state, men are looked on as things and not as persons. Reverence for God and respect for man can never be separated from each other.”

Well said Professor Barclay.

Let’s review briefly the history of Israel. The people of Israel came to the wilderness of Sinai on the third new moon after their exodus, and it was then, according to the old story, that The Ten Commandments were given to them. They came from Egypt (Exodus 19.1). It was just three months after their escape from Egypt. They had been slaves for years in Egypt. It was inevitable that their spirit was gone, as indeed their conduct at the Red Sea when Pharaoh was in pursuit of them makes quite clear (Exodus 14.10-12). At this stage they were a people who had been slaves and who had escaped as little more than a disorganized rabble. In order that a mob of people may become a nation they must have a law which they will obey and which will weld them into a community. There can be no community without law (William Barclay, *The Ten Commandments*, Westminster John Knox Press 1998, p.3).

Therefore, God gave them law to establish order and weld them into a strong nation, independent of pagan worship, idols, and alliances with godless nations. Again, it is the grace of God that saves us through faith in Jesus Christ. It is the Holy Spirit who empowers us to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind. It is the Holy Spirit that empowers us to love our neighbor as ourselves. Thus, it is grace and God’s moral law working in me by the power of the Holy Spirit that propels me forward in my Christian growth. To grow in grace is to continue in love with God and my fellowman.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is on His way.

Pastor T.

First Order (D)

A continuation from “First Order (C)”

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.com)

Exodus 20:3 “You shall have no other gods before me” (RSV).

God says clearly that He will not compete with other gods. He is very jealous for us, wanting us all to Himself and demanding that we have eyes for Him only. He is alone God of all creation, and we are to worship Him as such. Period.

William Barclay says this, “Men’s belief about God passed through three stages. The first stage was *polytheism*, which means the belief in many gods...The world at this stage was crammed with gods and goddesses, competing, as it were, for the gifts and the worship of men.

“The second stage was *henotheism*. At this stage a nation would accept one god as its god and would worship no other; but it was quite prepared to believe that the gods of the other nations were quite as real as its own god. At this stage a god was, as it were, supreme within his own territory, but other territories had other gods...At this stage a conflict between nations was a conflict between their gods, because the territory of the nation and the territory of the god were co-extensive.

“The last and final stage is *monotheism*, and this is the belief that there is not simply one god for each nation, but that there is only one God for all the earth.” This is what the Jews came to believe. Again Barclay states, “In the Revised Standard Version this first commandment is given in two forms, ‘You shall have no other gods *before* me,’ and in the margin, ‘You shall have no other gods *besides* me.’ The first form is *henotheism*, the form in which Jahweh was the God for Israel, although there were other gods for other nations; the second form is *monotheism*, the belief that there is no other god besides Jahweh at all.”

When Israel came to the promise land, they discovered that their neighbors held mysterious beliefs about their pantheon of gods. For example, they believed that *Baal* was the power of growth behind all living and growing things. They believed that the sex force of *Baal* was the most powerful force on earth because it brought children into the world. This turned the sexual act into a sacred act; and so the temples of Baal had crowds of priestesses who were sacred prostitutes. To have sexual intercourse with one of them was to be united with the life force of Baal the god.

As you might guess, this type of religion was very attractive to the lower side of human nature. Barclay says, “It turned sexual immorality into an act of worship, and gluttony and drunkenness into an act of praising the Baals.”

This is why The Ten Commandments begin by insisting that there is only one God, and all these other so-called gods are false imposters. Man will always become like the god or gods he worships. If he worships a licentious god like the *Baals* he will become a licentious man. If he worships a hard stern god, then he will, as the world has so often tragically seen, become a hard stern man.

to be continued...

First Order (E)

A continuation of “First Order (D)”

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.com)

The second commandment reads, “You shall not make for yourself a graven image” (Exodus 20:4).

There is no more savage and scathing indictment of the gods who are no gods than in the seventy-three verses of the little book of the Apocrypha, The Letter of Jeremiah.

The craftsman makes crowns for the idols in the same way as ornaments are made for girls. The priests will steal the gold and the silver from the gods who are idols and may well spend it in a brothel. The gods who are idols have got to be dusted like furniture every morning. Their faces are blackened by the temple smoke, and the bats and the swallows and the birds and even the cats settle on them. Set them upright, and they cannot move; tip them over, and they cannot raise themselves. They are no more than that which a carpenter or a goldsmith made them. If there is a fire in a temple, the priests can flee, but the gods can only stay and be burned. The temple has to be locked up at nights, lest the robbers steal the gods and their ornaments. Strong men strip them and go off with the booty, and they can do nothing to help themselves. They are no better than a scarecrow or a thorn-bush in a garden, on which every bird sits. They are no better than a dead body, cast out in the darkness (William Barclay, *The Ten Commandments*, Westminster John Knox Press 1998, pp. 9-10).

It seems incredible that the ancients regarded as a god that which they themselves cut, carved, and manufactured. It seems even more incredulous that modern man still cuts, carves, and manufactures idols. As technical, scientific, and modern as man has become, he still idolizes *things* of gold and silver instead of the One who made him—as well as all the gold and silver. Idolatry means making *means into ends*. In the beginning an idol was a means towards making memory and worship easier; in the end it became itself the object of worship. The means had become the end (Ibid., p. 11).

Does this happen in the contemporary church? Yes. A liturgy is a *means* of worshipping God; but an elaborate liturgy can become and end in itself, so that the means and the method of worship end by becoming more important than the worship itself. With every regard to caution, we must look beyond the liturgy, the church building, or whatever *means* of worship and *see the invisible God*. Jesus Christ is the end to our means of worship. Jesus Christ is the consummation of our worship. Period.

Again William Barclay says, “A man’s god is that which he thinks to be the most important thing in life. His god is that to which he is prepared to give his whole time, his whole thought, his whole strength. Whenever things become more important than persons to us, then idolatry has entered into life.

“In the days of the industrial revolution, the age when the machine was invented and discovered, the fatal mistake—from which industrial relationships have not even yet recovered—was that the machine was regarded as more important than the person, than the human being. Men, women and even little children were regarded as no more than machine-minders, to be used to keep the machines going and the profits rising. People were used as things, and it takes a long, long time to undo the damage that using persons as things can do to the relationships between master and man.”

To be continued...

Pastor T.

First Order (F)

A continuation of “First Order (E)”

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.com)

Exodus 20:7 says, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain” (KJV)

Unreality, vanity, and vain are associated with the meaning “in vain.” Empty, insincere, or frivolous attitudes and actions should never accompany an oath in God’s name. For example, to use the name of God in a promise or pledge without the intention of keeping it is taking the name of God in vain. To swear an oath in God’s name and then break the promise because it is inconvenient or too uncomfortable to keep, is to take it in vain. Sadly, I have broken this commandment many times over the

course of my life. I thank God for His forgiveness and grace in Christ Jesus. How about you?

When one reads Matthew 5:33-37, Jesus warns against taking oaths. He insists that a “yes” or “no” is all that is necessary. Why? In the time of Jesus there were Jews who were masters of evasion. If they did take an oath in the name of God, they would keep it, but they did everything possible to avoid doing so. They would swear by heaven, or by earth, or by Jerusalem, or by their own heads, and they would feel themselves quite free to break such an oath, because it did not actually include the name of God. God, so to speak, had not actually been made a partner to the transaction by name, and therefore the transaction was quite breakable (William Barclay, *The Ten Commandments*, Westminster John Knox Press 1998, p. 14).

Jesus declares that heaven is God’s throne and earth is God’s footstool and Jerusalem is God’s city. The point that Jesus is making is that you cannot possibly keep God out of any transaction, for God is everywhere present, and, whether his name is mentioned or not, he is there present when any promise is given or taken. All promises and pledges are made in the presence of God, just as all places are in the presence of God, and therefore an oath in the name of God is unnecessary, for God is there anyway (Ibid., p.14).

Then again there are times when an oath is proper. Jesus himself did not refuse to be put upon oath when he was before the High Priest. He was asked a question under oath and he answered it without comment (Matthew 26:63). Paul himself gives his sworn pledge to the Galatians (Galatians 1:20) that he is telling the whole truth. It is true that an oath is never necessary for the Christian, but clearly there are times when it should be taken— such as in a court of law.

Allow me to conclude this topic of study by listing some valid pledges before the Lord.

- (1) The marriage vow is spoken before God and witnesses. It is not to be broken, except in death or infidelity. It is a valid pledge before God.
- (2) There is the pledge of baptism in which parents pledge themselves to bring up a child in the knowledge and the love and the fear of God.
- (3) There is the pledge of the sacrament. The word *Sacrament* has many meanings. Its simplest is that the word *sacramentum* is the standard Latin word for a soldier’s oath of loyalty to his general and to his emperor. When a believer comes to the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, he or she should renew his and her loyalty to Christ as Saviour and King (Ibid., p.16).

Pastor T.

First Order (G)

A continuation of “First Order (F)”

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.com)

Exodus 20:8-11 says, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.”

Is the church in violation of this commandment because it meets on Sunday and not on the Jewish Sabbath (Saturday)?

According to many scholars, if the Jewish approach to the Sabbath had remained a rest day only—a day for reflection as to the goodness and faithfulness of God to his people, the fourth commandment would have been well received. However, such was not the case. Because the Jews had been subjected to gentile rule since the fall of Jerusalem six-hundred-years before Christ, the Jews were robbed of all possibilities of outward expansion, and, as it were, drove the nation in upon itself. Their scholars and experts and theologians began to study their own laws under the microscope. And worse, they began to be dissatisfied with principles and to insist upon rules and regulations to cover every conceivable event that might happen to man. There came a passion for definition and for the fragmentation of principles into rules and regulations (William Barclay, *The Ten Commandments*, Westminster John Knox Press 1998, p. 18).

The Jewish Sabbath was regulated beyond reason and advanced legalism beyond the concerns and needs of men. Jesus was explicit—telling the Scribes and Pharisees that God had not made man for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath was made for man. So regulated was the Sabbath Day, that Israel’s enemies would attack them on the Sabbath, knowing that the Jews would not resist but rather die. This is extremism at its extreme.

When Christianity was born, the first converts were Jews. From the teaching of *Acts of the Apostles* in the New Testament, the first gathering of Christians worshipped on the Jewish Sabbath at the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. They were Jews in everyway except that they worshipped Jesus Christ as the risen savior. Later on the Church would take on its own identity and choose the first day of the week as its day of worship. (Jesus was raised on the first day of the week). The church has never been unanimous about the right way to honor the fourth commandment. To this

day, there are Christian denominations that meet on the Jewish Sabbath and not on Sunday.

But what does the Bible say about honoring the Sabbath day?

A Christian may choose any day of the week to worship God. If we look technically at the New Testament's meaning of honoring God with the Sabbath, we discover something very interesting. For example, Hebrews 4:3-4 says, "For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, 'As I swore in my wrath, they shall never enter my rest,' although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. (4) For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way, 'And God rested on the seventh day from all his works'" (RSV). The author of Hebrews is writing to a Christian audience with a Jewish background. The author capitalizes on their understanding of The Ten Commandments to define what the Jewish Sabbath means for the Christian. The Christian was no longer held to the rule and regulation of the Sabbath Day like the Jew. The Christian was instructed live a life of faith in Christ Jesus. If the believer struggled, it was a struggle of the heart and mind to surrender in faith and trust to Jesus; however, once the believer had entered into faith-rest, he was fulfilling the true meaning of the Sabbath.

To be continued...

Pastor T

First Order (H)

A continuation of "First Order (G)"

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.com)

The fifth commandment reads, "Honor your father and your mother."

This cleavage between the generations is no new thing. It seems to have been part and parcel of life all through history. Here is a well known quotation: 'The world is passing through troublous times. The young people of today think of nothing but themselves. They have no reverence for parents or old age. They are impatient of all restraint. They talk as if they knew everything, and what passes for wisdom with us is foolishness with them. As for the girls, they are forward, immodest and unwomanly in speech, behaviour and dress.' That might have been written yesterday. In point of fact, it is an extract from a sermon preached by Peter the Hermit in 1274 (William Barclay, *The Ten Commandments*, Westminster John Knox Press 1998, p.50).

The sternest penalties were threatened against the person who broke the fifth commandment. Everyone who curses his father or his mother shall be put to death (Leviticus 20:9; Exodus 21:17). Two most significant things are to be noted. The commandment to honour father and mother comes directly after the commandment which lay down our duty to God, and the penalty for breaking the commandment is the same as the penalty for blasphemy against God (Leviticus 24:15) (Ibid.,p.39).

When Jesus came to Palestine, the Jews of His day were seeking loop holes in the Mosaic Law regarding the support of parents. Human nature has its low side. To avoid having to help their parents, there were those who said that all their goods were Korban, which is, formally dedicated to God. Then when an aged parent asked for help, they would reply, 'We cannot help you. All are goods are dedicated to God.' But it was in fact all a clever trick to avoid giving the help (Ibid., p.41).

Obviously there is extended commentary to the fifth commandment. The New Testament tells us that there is a promise of longevity for the child who honors his parents. The New Testament also elaborates on the family's responsibility to each other. The father is the head of the home as Christ is the head of the Church. The wife is one with the husband in marriage, and their children are to obey them—not the other way around. Fathers are not to exasperate their children but encourage them while loving them. The commentary is pretty sensible, but today's society has redefined the role of parents and children. And, I'm afraid, not for the better. (Who can improve on the Bible's instructions)?

What does it mean for an adult to honor his father and mother? It means that the parent should be helped as long he or she is alive. They should be looked after, and provisions made for their care, i.e., assisted living quarters, nursing home care, or etc. We, as children, have a responsibility to honor our parents as long as they live on the face of the earth. Blessings will follow you all the days of your life.

To be continued...

Pastor T.

For this purpose...

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

In Rick Warren's book *The Purpose Driven Life* (Zondervan Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2002), he opens with these words regarding life's purpose, "It's not about you.

“The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It’s far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God. You were born *by* his purpose and *for* his purpose.”

Christianity is a relationship. It is a relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ God’s only “begotten Son.” You and I were created to fellowship with God forever. You and I have no other reason for being here but to enjoy God.

You are not some mass of atomic particles suspended in space and time. You are not here by accident. You and I did not evolve from some lower state of matter, but were created in the likeness and the image of God “*by* his purpose and *for* his purpose.” God is a purposeful God who created the universe on purpose. You and I are a part of His creative purpose.

When you understand that God created you for a purpose, you will submit to his ways. God’s ways may seem odd at times, especially in the way he shows his love to you. Sometimes God’s ways are hard and restrictive and they may cause you to think that he is mad or upset with you; however, just because God deals with you through a hardship that doesn’t mean he doesn’t love you still or that you have fallen out of his perfect will. God’s will for you, and his way with you are sometimes different experiences.

Nevertheless, everything that God brings into your life has an ultimate purpose because “you were born *by* his purpose and *for* his purpose.”

The title of this message is “For this purpose...” Since you and I were created by a purpose driven God, he has given us purpose for living. Have you discovered your purpose in life? Aside from the fact that your ultimate purpose is to worship God, you have been given specific purpose. You have been called unto salvation and placed by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ. You have also been given a “commission,” a ministry so to speak. I want to share three things regarding your placement in the body of Christ:

- Everyone who receives Christ as Savior is placed in his body and given a special function
- Everyone who receives Christ is given a commission to go and minister in the name of Jesus
- Everyone’s experiences whether positive or negative are ultimately for a purpose

Let’s begin.

First, if you have received Jesus as your Savior and Lord, you are a part of his body and have been given a specific task.

At a meeting of the American Psychological Association, Jack Lipton, a psychologist at Union College, and R. Scott Bulione, a graduate student at Columbia University, presented their findings on how members of the various sections of 11 major symphony orchestras perceived each other. The percussionists were viewed as insensitive, unintelligent, and hard-of-hearing, yet fun-loving. String players were seen as arrogant, stuffy, and non-athletic. The orchestra members overwhelmingly chose "loud" as the primary adjective to describe the brass players. Woodwind players seemed to be held in the highest esteem described as quiet and meticulous, though a bit egotistical. Interesting findings, to say the least! With such widely divergent personalities and perceptions, how could an orchestra ever come together to make such wonderful music? The answer is simple: regardless of how those musicians view each other, they subordinate their feelings and biases to the leadership of the conductor. Under his guidance, they play beautiful music. [Today in the Word, June 22, 1992.](#)

In Paul's letters to the Corinthians, he uses an analogy of the human body to illustrate believers in the body of Christ. He tells about each member of the human body having significance, although one organ like the brain might seem more important than an insignificant organ like a little finger; nevertheless, each organ in the human body is there by design and purpose with a special function. In like manner, every believer has significance in the body of Christ whether or not the member preaches or sings beautiful songs from a pulpit. What is important is the head of the body. Christ Jesus is the head of his body, the church, and he directs the body in unity.

In March of 1981, President Reagan was shot by John Hinckley, Jr., and was hospitalized for several weeks. Although Reagan was the nation's chief executive, his hospitalization had little impact on the nation's activity. Government continued on. On the other hand, suppose the garbage collectors in this country went on strike, as they did not long ago in Philadelphia. That city was not only in a literal mess, the pile of decaying trash quickly became a health hazard. A three-week nationwide strike would paralyze the country. Who is more important--the President or a garbage collector? In the body of Christ, seemingly insignificant ones are urgently needed. As Paul reminds us, "The head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!' On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable" (I Cor. 12:21-22). [David Parsons.](#)

Second, everyone who receives Jesus Christ is commissioned to minister in the authority of the name of Jesus.

A one-legged school teacher from Scotland came to J. Hudson Taylor to offer himself for service in China. "With only one leg, why do you think of going as a missionary?" Asked Taylor.

"I do not see those with two legs going," replied George Scott. He was accepted. *Pillar of Fire, January First, 1983.*

Jesus told his disciples to go and carry the Good News to all parts of the world. Jesus is still commissioning disciples to go and do likewise. It seems many disciples think that the great commission to go is for the preachers and missionaries only. Jesus saved us to be a light unto the world. You might not be called to go across the oceans to minister the Gospel, but you are called to share the light where you are.

A missionary in Africa was once asked if he really liked what he was doing. His response was shocking. "Do I like this work?" he said. "No. My wife and I do not like dirt. We have reasonably refined sensibilities. We do not like crawling into vile huts through goat refuse...But is a man to do nothing for Christ he does not like? God pity him, if not. Liking or disliking has nothing to do with it. We have orders to 'Go,' and we go. Love constrains us." (Source is unknown.)

Third, even the experiences of life that come your way are designed with a purpose in mind.

In the catholic epistle James, he tells us to rejoice when we find ourselves in trials. How can this be? Why would we rejoice, counting it all joy, because we are suffering under duress for the Gospel's sake?

The Greek word for "trial" (RSV) means **trial or testing directed towards an end**. And the end is that he who is tested should emerge stronger and purer from the testing. If you understand why trials are brought into your life, you can make senses out of scriptures like Romans 8:28, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (NIV) Everything that God allows you to experience is given to you on purpose and is ultimately for your good.

Therefore, God brings things into your life for a purpose because he is a purposeful God who has a purpose for your life. Again, "you were born *by* his purpose and *for* his purpose." As a believer you are placed into the body of Christ supernaturally by his Holy Spirit—"for by his Spirit are we all baptized into one body." Because you are in his body you are given significance and a ministry. You might not be called a preacher or a missionary, but you are commissioned to shine your light where you are. And as you grow in Christ, you will experience persecutions and grave

trials, but be of good cheer. All the trials are designed for you to stretch you and promote you to greater challenges in life. You are a child of God. And like God, you are purpose driven in him.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus could come today. Are you ready?

Pastor T.



God's Seasons (Introduction to series)

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

I introduced a teaching series last evening (Wednesday September 9, 2004) at the 1900 hour prayer service. For those who attended the service, this Introduction is a review of what you received in the service. For those who couldn't attend, hopefully this material will bring you up to speed.

I want to underscore something: *This message is for the body of believers, especially the members of Faith Fellowship Church.* I believe that the Lord gave me this material for the local body so named. I pray that it speaks to your heart FFC, and that it causes you to love God more effectually.

Pastor's word to you...

I believe the Lord spoke to me recently in prayer and gave me a word for Faith Fellowship Church. The word is this: ***This is your appointed hour.*** After receiving that simple sentence, the Lord reminded me that He moves according to seasons. And then I was led through two weeks of Bible study by the Holy Spirit. During the study time, I was prayerfully aware that God was unfolding something beyond my natural ability to grasp. I would like to share with you some of the insights I received. So, over the course of the next few weeks, via my e-mail devotionals, I will share this lesson series with you. I believe that this series will challenge you to live a more radical, Spirit-filled life—so watch out. I dedicate this study in Jesus' name. I pray that it brings *flood gate overflow* into your daily walk with God. *Pastor T.*

Let the Series begin...

In Genesis 1: 14 we read, “And God said, ‘Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, and...’” [verse 15] (NIV). I want to highlight just two words in verse 14, *signs* and *seasons*. The word “signs” is taken from a Hebrew word that is also translated by the English word “miracles.” The lights that God created in the beginning of time were miraculous luminaries that broke the void of darkness and gave us a 24 hour day. Not only was the creation of God’s lights miraculous, but the lights were created to signal something. The stars, moon, and earth’s sun were to signal days, appointed times (seasons), and years. What does this mean? The ancient Hebrew could look at the sun and determine its relationship to the earth’s horizon and know the time of day. He could watch, week by week, for the “New Moon” and determine the beginning of a new month. He could look at the lights and see God’s glory revealed. These signs together would also signal him seven times a year to the special feasts (appointed times) ordained by God. The “appointed time(s)” were grand festivals mandated by God. They were not optional. At a certain time in the calendar year, the Israelites gathered and worshiped the Creator. These “appointed time(s)” would teach future generations that *God always shows up on time. He never fails to show up.* And He wants His people to *worship Him without ceasing. GREAT is THY FAITHFULNESS!*

The second word highlighted in verse 14 is the word, “seasons.” When we think of seasons, we think of winter, spring, summer, and fall. There are only four seasons on planet earth, and they always progress along in the respective order. [One Corinthians chapter 14 and verse 33 tells us, “For God is not a God of disorder but of peace...” (NIV)] In Oklahoma it might be difficult to determine which season we’re in, but we can always look at the calendar and know it’s winter, spring, summer, or fall. However, the Hebrew word translated in our English Bible as “seasons” actually means “appointed time(s).” God created the lights in the sky to signal His people to worship him. (Pagans in Egypt worshipped the sun, moon, and stars. God purposely called these luminaries greater and lesser lights to devalue their place in the order of things. Yes, they are essential to planet earth, but God is greater than all of His creation. All life comes from Him. The Hebrew was to worship God the Creator and not luminaries in the sky, the works of creation.) The changing of seasons is vital to an agricultural people like the ancient Hebrews. But what was more important than the seasons was the “appointed time(s)” (seven annual festivals) on

their solar/lunar calendars. The appointed dates directed them to cease activities, reflect on God's provisions, renew themselves in worship to the Creator, and remember God's faithfulness and steadfast timing to keep them throughout all generations. (During the French Revolution, the work week was changed by law from seven days to 10. Soon the French discovered that man, beast, and even machinery were wearing out prematurely. They went back to a seven day week. Maybe God's not kidding when He says that six days man shall work, but on the Sabbath he is to rest and reflect on his God!)

to be

continued...Pastor T.



Introduction continued, God's Seasons

God has shown Himself Steadfast throughout the Ages

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

The Apostle Paul concludes his first letter to the Corinthians by reminding them what's to come for the steadfast believer. One day, says Paul, "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." (I Corinthians 15:52). In light of this glorious event (the Rapture), Paul encourages the saints at Corinth to, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." Steadfast. Unmovable. Abounding. These words define a persevering believer. A steadfast believer displays the steadfast God within him. A believer could not persevere if his God was not a God of perseverance, steadfastness, and abounding grace. *A believer is only as steadfast as the one he worships.* So, how steadfast is God?

God is a steadfast God. He never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. God is not a wishy-washy man who is capable of lying. God is from everlasting to everlasting. God is faithful. God is trustworthy. God is Sovereign, God is

true blue. God can not ever fail. God is right all the time. God is fair and just always. Did I mention that God is the Great I Am that I Am? Well, He is and always will be. Yes, God is steadfast. Because God is dependable and punctual, He called for “appointed time(s)” with His people Israel. He said that He would meet them at an appointed place (tabernacle, and later a temple in Jerusalem), and at an appointed time (seven religious feasts annually) throughout their generations. He even appointed Jesus, His only begotten Son, to come to earth at an appointed time (Galatians 4:4 “But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,”). Why was it important for God to meet His people at an appointed place and at an appointed time? That’s easy to answer. He did this to teach His children, through the ages, that He is always faithful, always trustworthy, always on time, always where He said He would be. His people knew where to find Him always. So serious was God about these appointments that He created the sun, moon, and the stars to mark time on the earth (lunar/solar calendar) so that man could know beyond doubt the exact date to meet God year after year, after year. Remember, when God says something to us in His Word, He is always faithful to perform it (Jeremiah 1:12).

In Psalms 1:1-3 we read, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. (2) But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. (3) And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” Notice what’s in store for the godly person. He shall be rooted, established, anchored, holding steady, and steadfast—beside a living source, water—and will always bring forth fruit IN SEASON (and I might add, only in season)—and his leaves shall not shrivel from lack of moisture. Think about this for a minute. Many Christians are very faithful in their walk with the Lord, but they only produce fruit in season. Many misguided Christians cry out to God and wonder why God doesn’t answer their prayers. God does answer prayer—always. God sends the answer to your prayer when the season is right. Let me illustrate this, please. I love my son, Matthew. I want him to have nice things that will benefit him in life. However when he was 12 years old, I didn’t go down to a car dealership and purchase him a car just because I wanted him to have one or because he wanted one. He had to wait until he reached his 16th birthday. His season to receive an automobile was when he learned to

drive through a Drivers' Education program, procured a driver's license, and showed himself responsible enough to own a car. God will give us the nations, but only in our right season to obtain them. Therefore, don't get upset because you can't seem to get a breakthrough answer in prayer. When the season arrives, it will fall in your lap. So, don't give up praying and thanking God for the answer. Ecclesiastes 3:1 "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." Do you know which season you're in?

To be continued...Pastor T.



Grace to you...

The Bible speaks about grace, *more* grace, and *much* grace.

The Lord told the Apostle Paul that His grace "is sufficient." Paul was pummeled by a demonic spirit that he calls his "thorn in the flesh" (II Corinthians 12). Paul had sought God regarding the tormenting messenger of Satan and had asked God three times to remove it. God told Paul that He would not remove it but give him grace to overcome it.

God's grace is powerful. Grace is defined simply as God's unmerited favor. For example if someone were to come to you and say, "I want to give you health, prosperity, and favor" you would think it is too good to be true. At minimum you would think the person is giving you something for something in return. That's how we think. Gifts given to us oftentimes come with strings attached; however, God gives grace and never asks for anything in return. Why? Because He has it to give away, and no person could ever repay the debt.

God gives us grace, and He wants us to receive it without any strings attached. Consider the amount of grace God gives us. His grace is sufficient. His grace is *more* than sufficient. His grace is *much more* than needed. Think about this. The Bible says that where sin abounds, His grace *abounds* much more. There will always be more of God's goodness than evil in this world.

For example on September 11, 2001, we witnessed evil at its worst. Although evil fell on America that day, God's goodness was present also.

Evil men high-jacked planes and careened into buildings to destroy life. Firefighters, police officers, and medical personnel ran into the collapsing structures to save lives. Churches across the nation sent prayer counselors, provisions, and helpers to minister the love of Jesus Christ. The good of others became God's abounding grace to us that day.

When I think of God's grace being more than what I need for any situation, I think about the over-abundant sunlight that fills the earth. The sun is just one of trillions of stars in the universe. The earth is miniscule in comparison to our sun. The sun releases energy in the form of light and heat 360 degrees in our galaxy. Only a small amount hits earth. The rest is lost in space. God doesn't consider the energy wasted. His creation speaks of His greatness to behold. And what do I behold by considering His sun and earth? I consider His grace to be more than sufficient to meet all my needs in this life and beyond. He's more than enough.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming soon.

Grace to you,
Pastor Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.com)



Interconnected...

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

I'm sure you are familiar with the term, conjoined twins, or as they are more popularly known—Siamese twins. These are twins who are joined in such a way that they share some organs. There is ordinarily an interconnectedness circulatory system, so that the vital fluids flow through the entire conjoined body. In many cases, the two persons share some vital organs, so that they can only be surgically separated by sacrificing the life of one of them, or even both of them (Millard J. Erickson, *Making Sense of the Trinity*, Baker Book House Co, 2000).

A fairly recent example is the Holton twins, Katie and Eilish, who were born to parents living just outside Dublin, Ireland. They were conjoined from the shoulder to the hip, and shared one liver and one intestinal

system. They had two legs, and two arms in roughly the normal place, with two additional arms protruding from the middle of their back. They had two hearts, and the remainder of the normal organs in approximately the usual fashion, although their torso was larger and heavier than usual for a single child.

The parents had to make the agonizing decision whether to approve the surgery attempting to separate them. They were determined that under no conditions would they decide to sacrifice the life of one to preserve the life of the other. Finally the decision was made to proceed with the operation, which was attempted in May 1992. Eilish survived, but Katie died after a few days. An autopsy revealed that her heart was weak and underdeveloped, and that she had been relying on the action of Eilish's heart to supply her part of their body with blood. Eilish showed strong indications of missing Katie. Here was a case where not only the bodies but the lives of the two were so intertwined that one literally depended very heavily on the former psychologically. Whereas the personalities of the two twins had been quite different, Mr. and Mrs. Holton testified that Eilish who had been the more serious of the two now took on some of the personality qualities of Katie, especially her playfulness, so that, in the parents' words, 'It is as if a part of Katie lives on, as well.' (Ibid., pp. 63-64)

In reading this story again, I thought of the interconnectedness of the Body of Christ—that is the Church. I also thought about the Trinity. Not only do the three members of the Godhead interpenetrate each other and supply their life to one another, but that all three are involved in all of the works of God. Certain of these works are primarily the doing of one of these rather than the others, but all participate to some degree in what is done. Thus it is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit at work together in my salvation, healing, sanctification, resurrection, and glorification.

The glue that keeps the Trinity and even the Body of Christ together is *God's love*. Please note that I said it is God's love that binds us together and not human love. There is a big difference in the two. This morning I want to share with you some of the differences between God's love and human love. If we can note the differences between the two it will help us maintain relationships even when our love has been tested and sorely tried to the point of exhaustion. We truly can love our neighbors as ourselves. And we can even love our enemies with God's help.

There are three separating factors that make human love what it is—incomplete and imperfect.

The first separating factor is our physical bodies (Ibid., p. 59). We are separated, and the law of physics which states that two physical objects

cannot occupy the same space will always have that effect, as seen in the collision of automobiles or football players. Our physical makeup has the advantage of making us distinct, unique, and individual; but it has the disadvantage that communication between two human persons must take place through some medium.

There are many mediums through which humans communicate. I may communicate ideas, feelings, information or conversation through media, voice, art, body-language, touch, emotion and the list goes on. The problem or the break down in communication comes because the medium itself is imperfect. Is there a solution to communicating in an imperfect world, through an imperfect medium, to imperfect people? Yes there is.

I will illustrate this solution by reading Romans 8: 26, “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express” (NIV). In the immediate context the Bible is telling us that there is sometimes a breakdown in our communication to God by prayer. Sometimes we have things on our heart, and we just can’t put them into words. It is at this time that the Holy Spirit will help us communicate what is truly on our heart. The Spirit of God will articulate through our prayers what we need to say to God. He does this by “groaning” through us. In other words, the Holy Spirit can supersede our physical limitations in communicating effectively before God. He can use even our *groans* to speak the eloquence of our hearts before the Father. I have one question for you. Do you pray in the Holy Spirit?

A second factor separating human persons from one another is differing experiences (Ibid., p.59). To the extent that we have not had similar experiences we have difficulty identifying with the other, and frequently have not had the exact same experience. This affects the communication process adversely as well. We use a particular symbol, assuming that the other person understands by it the same thing that we do. Thus, we may think we agree when we do not, or that we disagree when we are actually talking about different things. We are unable to ‘get inside the other person’s head’ to experience what he or she has experienced.

Again the Bible addresses the problem of differing experiences. I Corinthians 12: 14-26. Listen to verse 26, “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it” (NIV). The eye of the body was not made by God to experience and interpret the same tasks as the hands, the mouth, or stomach. However, because the eye is of the same organism as the hand, the mouth, and the stomach, it will experience the same pain against bodily attacks. *Empathy* is key to communicating when life’s experiences are not equal to all parties involved.

The third separating or isolating factor with human persons is preoccupation with one's self, one's own needs and problems, which makes it difficult to focus on, understand, or empathize with other persons. Because we are so caught up with our own needs and problems, we find it difficult to really focus on the other's concerns. Because God is other-oriented, and is completely secure in himself, each of the persons of the Trinity is so also, and each is able to identify fully with the experiences of each of the others. There is nothing to distract them from this (Ibid., p.60).

I've listed three isolating factors that keep humans from effective communication. A physical body, differing experiences, and preoccupation with one's own life can hamper effective communication between us. However, I'm going to end this document by elaborating on what I mentioned in the beginning. Yes, you and I will always run into problems in communication to one another. We are imperfect creatures with an imperfect and limited love for one another. Nevertheless, that does not keep us from having godly and holy fellowships and relationships in Christ Jesus. God's love is perfect. When we recognize our love to have reached its limits, it is at this time that we call on God. We are to call on God to love with his perfect love through us. "Lord, I'm having a difficult time in loving this person but your Word tells me to love everyone. Therefore, God love this person through me."

Remember, God's love is not an emotion. To love our fellowman with God's love is a decision on our part to love in spite of how we feel towards someone.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is perfect Love!

Pastor T.



How do you see it?

Terry Dashner (www.fcbba.com)

Someone once said that there are not two sides to a story but three—one side, the other, and the truth in between. Especially is this true in politics, but in the case of truth and justice there can only be one side—the truth side.

Yes I know you can deny the truth by saying it isn't so, but you still can't change the truth. Truth is truth whether or not I agree with it. Our nation is

struggling to make truth out of war in Asia. Some say America is the villain in Asia. Others say that tyranny and terrorism are the reasons we fight. But what is the truth that can not be denied?

The truth that can not be denied is that America didn't start the war on terrorism. She responded to an attack on American soil. Remember September 11, 2001? The truth is that America's military is composed of the finest citizens in the world. They are men and women of all creeds, religions, colors, and cultures fighting as one American soldier, one airman, one sailor, and one marine. They are the finest citizens because they volunteer to lay down their lives daily for an oppressed people on foreign soil. And what's the truth? Many Americans have died in combat to save a foreign people from tyranny. There is no greater service and devotion than this—that a man lay down his life for another.

Theodore Roosevelt once said, "Americanism is a question of principle, of idealism, of character: it is not a matter of birthplace or creed or line of descent." The truth is that we fight because of principle, idealism, and justice. It is not right that a people should be enslaved by another group of people, whether by government, religion, or extremism. To liberate a man from tyranny is just, and justice always seeks truth at any cost.

Abraham Lincoln once said, "Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves." Try and persuade an American veteran that there is no truth in Lincoln's statement. It can't be done. Again Lincoln said, "The shepherd drives the wolf from the sheep's throat, for which the sheep thanks the shepherd as his liberator, while the wolf denounces him for the same act as the destroyer of liberty." I rest in this. I can't change the fact that some will always oppose America the liberator. Although I do rest assured by the truth that all men, everywhere want to live free. And that man everywhere knows that America will always be the land of the free.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming soon.

Pastor T.



How do you know?

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.com)

If you and I are trying to decide whether a public building is built well, it will matter a great deal whether we are viewing it as architects, builders, artisans, or safety inspectors.

Are you familiar with the term “Cognitive Styles?” Quoting from Dr. Stackhouse’s book, *Humble Apologetics Defending the Faith Today* (Oxford Press, 2002) it says, “When we seek to engage our neighbor on a matter of faith, it is crucial to make sure that we are thinking together in the same mode, not just about the same subject matter. If we look together at the same question but in quite different cognitive styles, it is unlikely we will come to the same conclusion.”

That’s right. Not everyone thinks alike. As a matter of fact, there is a long trail of cognitive styles in the West from the eighteenth century (Enlightenment period) to the current day post-modernism. The Enlightenment period came about from the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century. Another name for it is the “Age of Reasoning.” Dr. Stackhouse says, “First, when it came to matters of epistemology—that is, the philosophy of knowledge—the Enlightenment put its confidence in reason and experience. Rationalists might follow Rene Descartes’s lead and emphasize the former; empiricists might follow John Locke instead and emphasize the latter. But both sorts believed that the surest route to knowledge of the world lay in the appropriate use of what the senses said, what people felt within, and what disciplined reflection made of it all.”

Then again, there is another cognitive style that came about not long after the Enlightenment had made its inroads into Western culture. Romanticism looked to intuition and feeling. According to scholars who study this period, truth was reality to be felt and absorbed, not data to be retrieved and analyzed. Whereas the Enlightenment period had been keen on scientific experiments—objective facts—Romanticism was passionately subjective. Although both movements agreed that truth was discoverable, they disagreed on the best way to discover it. In simple, Romantics “embraced” things and discovered truth. Rationalists discovered truth by taking things apart. How do *you* discover truth?

“As the nineteenth century progressed, new currents developed that both carried forward previous elements and added new ones” says Stackhouse. The Enlightenment had hoped to devise universal laws that governed all things past, present, and future. But in the nineteenth century a number of influential thinkers began to see that, while such universal laws might still be discoverable, what they described were processes that could be understood properly only over time—and sometimes very long periods of time indeed. So, in order to truly discern something, one needed to look beyond its surface and present moment to understand the reality. One could find truth if one knew where and how to look for it.

Today all three modes—Enlightenment, Romanticism, and Process—continue to excel in the intellectual culture of modern times; however, none of them dominate or corner the way we seek truth.

Although I've given you a short history lesson on Western intellectualism, I have something more to say. **God is truth**. His truth became incarnate—took on flesh and blood—in the person of Jesus Christ. Not only did Jesus manifest the truth of the Father, by the help of the Holy Spirit we have the ability to recognize truth and receive it. Why is truth important? Who would want to live and die for a lie? If I'm convinced I'm walking in truth, I'll lay down my life for it if necessary; however if I know the cause that I am living for is based on deception, I will be reluctant to promote it, not to mention dying for it." Jesus said that He is the way, the truth, and the life. Whereas others might believe that Jesus is a way, a truth, or an alternative life, for me, Jesus has become "**The...!**"

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming soon...He said He would. And He wouldn't lie to us, honestly.

Pastor T.



How do I know that God exists?

I look at the Jewish race.

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

At the time of Jesus, Hebrew was already a dead language. The spoken tongue was Aramaic. Yet even today all over the world thousands of Jewish children learn Hebrew. It is used for official documents in the land of Israel.

This tenacity of language is more than stubbornness. It is a sign of the determination of this ethnic group to keep its identity. Scattered, beaten, battered, cursed, consigned to inferior status for centuries, the Jews have nonetheless consistently clung to their faith. Whether or not those around agree with them, the Jewish people hold to their faith and pass it on to their children. It is an admirable trait.⁶

⁶ Albert P. Stauderman, *Let Me Illustrate*, (Augsburg Publishing House: MN, 1983), p.69.

When I think about the survival of the Jew—despite her enemy’s attempts to destroy her since her inception as a nation—I marvel and affirm my faith in God. Why? If there is one, overwhelming proof that God exists, it is the preservation of the nation Israel. Only the God, who rules over all nations, could have kept Israel from going the way of the ancient Canaanites.

Stop and think about this, please. When God promised father Abraham the land of Palestine by covenant, the land promised was filled with a people who would not be moved aside, easily. Isn’t it interesting that God has never reneged on His promise to Israel (or anyone for that matter). After thousands of years, with Israel being displaced from Palestine through many of those years, the Jews were awarded a national status in her ancient land in 1948. And here it is 2005, and against all odds, she remains—the nation Israel.

The Old Testament is an ancient document of promise to the children of faith. It speaks of Canaanites, Amorites, Gibeonites, Geshurites, and a host of other “ites.” But none of these would willingly enter covenant with the one true God, Jehovah; therefore, I can not point to one Amorite, Gibeonite, Geshurite, or any other “ites” who is living and thriving as a nation today. Nevertheless, I can point to Israel as a modern nation. Why? Because God does not lie. When He makes a covenant with a people, He keeps His word forever.

The very fact that Israel lives in her ancient land which was promised to her since the days of father Abraham is the only proof I need that God exists. What about you? Do you need more evidence? The fact that God lives and loves you was established 2000 years ago in Palestine. Jesus who is God in the flesh came into the world to rescue us from your sins. This, too, seems impossible—God becoming flesh to suffer and die for you and me. But just as the Jews have been preserves against all odds, Jesus lived and died for the world. He will receive you forever if you call upon Him. It’s miraculous.



How confident are you...

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

How confident are you with your knowledge of the world beyond? Are you positive and therefore confident that the natural world, the here and now, is all that there is or ever will be? If you have no concern for a Supreme Being are you satisfied with your mortal knowledge that leads you to believe so?

Many years ago there lived a French mathematician. He is credited with inventing the first calculator and coming up with the primary calculations for the modern day computer. He did this over 300 years ago. His name is Pascal. Pascal was also a devout Christian. His views and philosophies regarding the supernatural have come down to us as “Pascal’s Wager.”

The wager says this essentially. If I wager that there is nothing beyond this life and make no preparations for the afterlife, I may or may not meet judgment; however if there is a God who will judge all men according to their works and I have not made preparations to appease His demands, I lose everything. On the other hand if I receive God’s righteous covering through His Son Jesus and live my life according to His plan then when I die and awake (or remain asleep) to nothing, I’ve gained and lost nothing.

Wouldn’t it behoove us because of our limited knowledge of what lies beyond the natural realm to cover ourselves with eternal assurance? I know I sound rather “preachy” by suggesting this proposition but, then again, I’m trying to appeal to the agnostic’s sense of reasoning—there might be a Supernatural Being that exists. We just can’t know for sure.

Christianity as been tested against some of the greatest thinkers of all time for over 2000 years and has passed the “reasonable” tests. It has stood the test not because it was chiefly intellectual, but because it recognizes that man’s ultimate knowledge can never be more than what is mortal, thus leaving large gaps in knowing what is beyond this mortal life. If, however, man’s knowledge is equal to a Supreme Being’s knowledge, he can accurately know with all confidence what lies ahead. I, for one, can not make that assumption. I am content to admit my limitations of knowledge and therefore ask for God’s grace to ready me for the world to come. God is all knowing. I am not.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming again. This is I know in my heart.

Pastor T.



Haven't we learned our Lesson?

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

I like reading columnist Cal Thomas. He makes a lot of sense, especially in regards to the West trying to democratize the Muslim world. He, as well as I, thinks this might be an idea short of reality (all right an idea that's impossible). Let me explain. What if Muslims don't want Western Democracy but are devoted to spreading Islamic law world wide, as they have propagated since the day they left the Arabian Desert to conquer the West in the seventh century? Before you delete this article, give me a chance to argue my point. I concede that I may be biased to current events because of my reading of history, but there's no getting around the facts of history even if it's revised to fit the political correctness of the day. History still teaches the danger in *not* learning from history.

When the 911 Commission was roasting Dr. Condoleezza Rice, a devout Christian and admired American Patriot, the other day, she reminded viewing audience of America's history of not assessing other's intentions very well. She reminded us that we failed to properly assess German intentions until two years after the sinking of the *Lusitania* in 1915. Remember it was not until 1917, two full years after the sinking and the wholesale slaughter of thousands of Europeans by the Germans that we entered the War to end all Wars. We repeated this failure to properly assess intentions when the Nazi regime violated the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, which ended WWI. Democratic countries continued to ignore Hitler, hoping he'd just go away, until 1939 when he invaded Poland. I believe Dr. Rice was on to something. I believe she wanted us to know that predicting an event like 911 is impossible, but also I believe that there was a hidden message in her history lesson.

This hidden message was brought to light the other day while reading the archives of Cal Thomas. His article was dated November 11, 2003, but it read like today's newspaper to me. In November of 2003, President Bush was addressing the National Endowment for Democracy. In his speech President Bush asked the rhetorical question, "Are the people of the Middle East somehow beyond the reach of liberty?" Cal Thomas, in regards to this statement wrote, "It depends on the meaning of liberty. What if the Islamic nations of the region define liberty differently from us? Suppose they see our liberty as something corrupting to faith and morals and our culture as something they do not wish to import...?" When I read this I thought, "Haven't we learned our lesson?" Haven't we learned from history that we oftentimes fail to assess the real intentions of other

countries, especially the Middle East and nations of Islam? History certainly has taught us, more than once, that not every country wants Democracy, and that not every religion is advanced by a peaceful means.

So here we are in 2004 still thinking that Islam is a peaceful and benign religion and that Middle Eastern nation, which have existed since the beginning as a rule other than Democracy, are going to bow down and accept our Western ideas with joy and love in their hearts. This is what we want to believe, I know. I would certainly like for everyone to love my Nation and its Constitutional Law as I do, but it “ain’t” going to happen. The only way the nations of the world are going to love their fellowman and live in peace is by having a change of heart, not a change of government. The change of heart every nation needs (even America) can be achieved *only* through the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ. I’m not talking about *imposing* another religion on someone. I’m talking about *introducing* Jesus, the peacemaker, to the people of a nation. One day all the nations of this world will become the nations of the Lord God. Until that time, I’ll tell the story of Jesus and the real lesson of history—unless a man repents, he will never know the joy of true and lasting peace.

Keep the faith.



Jesus’ actions toward civil government...

Continuation of a study on separation of church and state...

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

Christendom believes that Jesus Christ was/is God in human flesh. As stated by ancient church councils, “He is fully God and fully man.” Granted; but this is, no doubt, a hard statement and must be received by faith. In this mortal body, we will never understand this divine mystery totally.

But what do we understand about the God-man—Jesus Christ? We know how He viewed civil authorities. We know how He reacted to the earthly-powers-that-be. Did He or did He not advocate resistance against civil

government? We know He could have, but He did not lead a rebellion against Rome—one of the most, cruel governments in history?

Let's take a look at the Book of all books—the Holy Bible—and see what it says regarding this.

Gary DeMar writes in his book entitled, ***God and Government A Biblical and Historical Study*** (American Vision, Inc. 2001), “It is true that Jesus ‘did away with’ certain aspects of the Old Testament law. Those laws dealing with redemption (especially those laws having reference to the shedding of blood) have been done away with in their outward form. This does not mean, however, that the shedding of blood is no longer required by God. Salvation can only come through the shedding of blood: ‘And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness’ (Hebrews 9:22 cf. Leviticus 17:11)

“...The law was never to be a means by which an individual obtains righteousness, but it has always been a standard by which we measure righteousness. In the area of civil government, *if the law is done away with, then what will be the standard for righteousness?* (emphasis is mine) If it is not the law of God then it will be the law of men.” Good point.

Robert L. Dabney in his ***Lectures in Systematic Theology***; page 357, states, “The very particulars in which it is pretended Jesus amended, softened, and completed the moral law, are stated just as distinctly, although perhaps not as forcibly in all cases, by Moses and the prophets, in their expositions of the Decalogue [Ten Commandments]...Christ, in His Sermon on the Mount, then, and other places, rebukes and corrects, not the law itself, nor the Old Testament interpretations of the law, but the erroneous and wicked corruptions foisted upon it by traditions and Pharisaic glosses. The moral law could not be completed [added to], because it is as perfect as God, of whose character it is the impress and transcript. It cannot be abrogated or relaxed, because it is as immutable [unchangeable] as He.” Interesting, is it not?

So far we see Jesus upholding the moral law of God because He was/is God in the flesh—same character and attributes as the Father God. Therefore, He came not to do away with Old Testament law, but to correct its godless application by the religious element of the day—the Pharisees and scribes. These religious groups had become a law unto themselves—interpreting it as they desired to exact revenge or dole out a trumped-up justice. (They later arrest Jesus on trumped-up charges.) Jesus was not attacking the law of God but the religious element that made the law a burden for the people. Jesus was not an anarchist but acknowledged that all civil authorities were subject to God’s law.

Again, let's turn to the Book.

Jesus made statements throughout the Gospel books of the New Testament, supporting civil government. He told tax collectors for the Roman government that they should not get out of the business. But, rather, just be fair in their assessments and collections. He told those involved in military service—Roman Centurions—that they should not use their position of authority and power as a way of extorting favors from those under their rule. Both these positions—tax collectors and military personnel—are a legitimate occupation for the running of any civil government (Ibid. page 108, Gary DeMar).

I think it interesting that the Bible never slanders a Roman Centurion. As a matter of fact, every Centurion in the Bible is spoken about in a favorable way, even the one who acknowledged the Son of God on the Cross. Even Jesus said in regards to the Centurion of Matthew chapter eight that He had never seen a greater faith in anyone in Israel. The Centurion was a man under authority; therefore, he understood how authority worked. He told Jesus to just give the order, the command, and his servant would be healed. He, the Centurion, was used to receiving orders and giving them to young soldiers who would die in battle because of the orders. His faith in Jesus caused Him to “marvel.”

Further more, Jesus did not rebuke Peter for carrying a sword that he used to strike the high priest's servant in the Garden. He rebuked Peter for using the sword unlawfully. He said, “All those who take up the sword [unlawfully] shall perish by the sword [lawfully]” (Matthew 26:52). A man can not take action against his enemies without lawful cause. The laws of the state determine the rules of engagement. And the law of the state is ordained or sanctioned by God (Romans 13). Men who fill positions of civil government may be evil, but the civil government as a whole is not evil but sanctioned by God Almighty to keep and maintain lawful order in society.

More on this later...

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming one day to correct the injustices of men. The Bible says so.

Pastor T.



Kwai Valor

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

At the end of each day the tools were collected from the work party. On one occasion a Japanese guard shouted that a shovel was missing and demanded to know which man had taken it. He began to rant and rave, working himself up into a paranoid fury and ordered whoever was guilty to step forward. No one moved. "All die! All die!" he shouted, cocking and aiming his rifle at the prisoners. At that moment one man stepped forward and the guard clubbed him to death with his rifle while he stood silently at attention. When they returned to the camp, the tools were counted again and no shovel was missing.

Is this story fictitious? No, it isn't. As a matter of fact the paragraph above is taken word for word from Ernest Gordon's book entitled, *Miracle on the River Kwai*. Gordon witnessed this event as a POW working on the Burma Railway during World War II.

Does this story stir you in any way? It does me. No, it's not the eloquent writing or the cadence in rhythm that moves me. It's not the punctuation or the strong verbs chosen by the author. But, nevertheless, it moves me to *awe*. I'm in awe over the nameless man who stepped up to bear for all the false blame. His uncommon valor captivates my senses momentarily.

This begs the question: Why do some stories move us to ponder while others bore us to tears? I believe it is because something deep inside of every person cries out, "Who can step up to help me?" I believe there is a deep hole in every living person that can only be filled up by the One who created and wants to help us. When I read a story such as Gordon's, I see the incomprehensible love of God for His pitiful creature—me.

I stand in amazement at Jesus the Nazarene, so goes the old holiness hymn of my youth. You and I were made to ponder the great love of our God. In pondering we are broken. In contrition we are by His hands lifted. Being lifted we are helped to deliverance. He has delivered my soul from fear of abandonment. Jesus has come to me and helped me. Therefore I am satisfied. Yes, I am satisfied with Jesus—how about you? Pastor T.

A Paradox of Law

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

There is an interesting paradox in II Samuel 3:13-16. Maybe you can help me understand this puzzling saga in the life of King David. Let me give you the story.

“‘Good,’ said David. ‘I will make an agreement with you. But I demand one thing of you: Do not come into my presence unless you bring Michal daughter of Saul when you come to see me.’ Then David sent messengers to Ish-Bosheth son of Saul, demanding, ‘Give me my wife Michal, whom I betrothed to myself for the price of a hundred Philistine foreskins.’

“‘So Ish-Bosheth gave orders and had her taken away from her husband Paltiel son of Laish. Her husband, however, went with her, weeping behind her all the way to Bahurim. Then Abner said to him, ‘God back home!’ So he went back.” (NIV)

King Saul promised his daughter Michal to David for a bounty of blood. When David followed through with his end of the deal, Saul reneged, out of contempt for David, and gave her to Paltiel. This broke David’s heart, but he got on with his life. When Saul died and Abner wanted to consolidate the tribes of Israel as one nation, he made a deal with David. David agreed to the terms on one condition. He wanted Michal who was his wife legally. He got her.

This brings a puzzling twist to the story. Did David have the right to ask for Michal? Legally, yes. Did Abner have the right to deliver her to David? Again, by law, yes. Now here’s where the story moves from black-and-white to gray. What about Michal and her husband, Paltiel? Did they have any say in the matter? It appears that Paltiel was grief stricken and deeply hurt. Did he have the right to protest? Did he have any legal recourse?

Let me advance the clock to modern day Israel. God gave Israel the land of modern Palestine by covenant, during the life of Abraham. The Jews lived and held the land for many centuries, until they were finally dispersed in 70 AD. It wasn’t until 1948 that Israel occupied her home, once again, as a legal nation. And now she is asked to give back the Gaza which she claimed in the six-day war of 1967. She is doing it as I write, but she’s not doing it without major protest.

May I ask you to solve this paradox for me, please? If Israel owns the land by divine right and by tradition, isn’t it her land forever? And whose law is greater than her law, by which she is made to comply? If her land was

given by divine right, then only the Divine can serve her with eviction, right?

Okay, I know Paltiel got his feelings hurt, but his marriage to Michal was “fruit” from the poison tree to begin with and was null and void. David had every legal right to claim and demand what was legally his. I think, if anything, this should tell us just how important law is to a civilized country. Do away with the Law and every man becomes a law unto himself—touchy feely stuff. Law is good.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Justice will prevail if not in this life, in the life to come.



Let the Light Be Light

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

Genesis 1:3 “Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.” (NASB)

According to the Genesis account of creation, in the beginning there was God. But before we, who were created in His image and after His likeness, could begin our existence a suitable habitat had to be provided. That is interesting. From the beginning God has anticipated and provided for our needs first, before we even had needs. This is illustrated beautifully in the Gospels, when the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, tells His disciples that God the Father knows what they need, even before they asked for help. God is the God who provides (sometimes even more than we need) and has always provided for His own.

Allow me to share a few thoughts regarding this third verse of Genesis one. Before God created the earth, which was formless and void, He released *light*. There has been much discussion through the ages about the Hebrew words translated “without form” and “void” in the King James Bible. I’ll spare you the semantics and the parsing of Hebrew verbs and just say this: Some believe that the earth existed before the Genesis account of creation and *became* waste and void after Lucifer was cast out of heaven to the earth. Thus when we read the Genesis account of

creation, it is speaking of a *re—creation* of the world. This is called the “Gap Theory.” But upon closer scrutiny of the Old Testament, the “Gap Theory” has too many gaps to be truth.

Nonetheless, the Genesis account reveals that the earth was created not unlike a sculptor, sculpting his masterpiece from a lump of clay. The earth, at the time the Spirit of God *hovered* over it, was completely covered by the oceans. It was wrapped in an opaque atmosphere that had to be separated from the body of water and lifted upwards into the heavens. There was nothing but gross darkness, depths of ocean, and dense vapor, before God released His light. But thank God for the light. Releasing the light was God’s first act before bringing the earth from formless waste to something good. Let the light shine!

Out of our void and chaos comes God’s answer—a creative miracle of light.

Think about this. After 9/11, the world was groping for a word from God. In our fear and confusion we cried out to God for answers and He responded—as He has always answered the formless waste of our lives—with His light. Jesus said, as recorded in John’s Gospel, that He was the Light of the world. Jesus as Light is comfort to the bereaved, hope to the downcasts, salvation to the lost, and the power to rebuild our lives out of the ashes. After 9/11, people who ordinarily didn’t attend to church, came and listened for a word from God. Did we receive anything? Yes, His eternal promise to reach down and pull us from darkness and ruin and set our feet on solid ground is what we got. And I believe He came through. The economy survived, and the terrorists who hoped to paralyze us with fear instead incurred the military might of America. Our pain, through time, was lessened and we moved forward. The acts of heroism by firefighters, police officers, and paramedics inspired us. Our President led us forward. God answered us with His light. Jesus shines brightest when we are facing our darkest days.

What is the “light” of Genesis 1:3?

Seems there is some confusion among Bible students about the light of Genesis 1:3 and the “greater and lesser lights” of Genesis 1:14-18. Are they the same or are they two different lights created by God? Although there is disagreement among scholars, I believe the following. For one, the light of verse three seems to originate from God’s glory. Why? In Job 38:19, God answers Job’s questions by reminding Job of His Sovereignty. Beginning with verse one God gives a litany of quick retorts. In verse 19, God asks Job if he can tell Him the way of light. This seems to imply that light is beyond human understanding because it is the essence of God’s nature. In other words, light was not created. It, like God, always was; however, His light which was released in the creation act was actually the Light of His glory being directed, specifically, upon the world for the first

time. This is God's grace in operation. He could have withheld His glory from man. He could have kept His light to Himself, but He didn't. He let the light of His glory shine forth so that everything created would be touched by His light.

John's Gospel, chapter one, tells us that everyone born into this world has a bit of God's light in him. This bit of light helps man reach out to God's redeeming "Light" which comes through Jesus Christ. When the Spirit of God begins to draw a man towards Him and man cries out for salvation, God's Light of Salvation engulfs man's spirit. Man's spirit through God's redeeming grace becomes totally lit up in "the true Light"—Jesus. The book of Revelation tells us that there is coming a time in eternity when the sun will shine no more. It won't be needed because God will provide His Light. Therefore, it is likely that the light of verse three is God's essence shining to us.

God's light is closely associated with His word.

God spoke and light was released. In John's Gospel chapter one it records that Jesus is the Word of God. Jesus is the exact and perfect representation of the Father. Jesus is the perfection of God's thought, will, and spoken word. Jesus is the "Logos" of God. Jesus speaks and does whatever the Father speaks and does. They are one. There is nothing between them—perfect relationship. The Third Person of the Trinity is also *one* with them and continually *proceeds* from the Father and Son to us. In the opening statements of Genesis one, we see the close association (same will) of the Father, the Spirit, the Word (God said...), and the Light. These all are *one* in purpose and objectivity for all time and eternity. They were all at *one* before the earth burst forth in plant life, beauty, and humanity. They are still at *one* today working for our good. They will continue as *one* throughout eternity. This is glorious. That's why the Bible says that the entrance of God's Word gives us light. The Word or Lamb of God—Jesus Christ—is the Light of the world. When a man calls on Jesus for salvation, the Word comes into his heart and brings the True Light. Man can now see the way before him. He can walk in the Light and not stumble in darkness. Man can live life to the fullest because the *Light is come*.

And so, there was light...the sun, moon and stars came later and are merely light bearers. The sun's fission produces fire. The fire bears forth light in the midst of darkness. However, the sun, moon, and stars of Genesis 1:14 were created on the fourth day of creation to regulate time for man. Without these heavenly bodies, it would be impossible to chart time (calendar), regulate the limits of day from night, and navigate distances across the oceans. God gave these bodies for seasons so that man could worship God at annual times, and at a certain location (Jerusalem before Jesus came). He gave these so that plants could grow, and life as we know it could flourish.

To be continued...

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus, the Light of the world, is coming soon!

Pastor T.



Light On in Life

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

When Thomas A. Edison died on October 18, 1931, President Herbert Hoover suggested that all the lights in America be turned off for one minute in honor of the noted inventor. It was when he was only thirty-two that the youthful inventor, after thirteen months of repeated failure, had developed the first incandescent light. It was, in his words, the “most difficult” of all his inventions.

But President Hoover’s proposal was never carried out, because responsible leaders decided that too much risk would be involved if all lights were suddenly extinguished at the same time.

Edison designed a product that proved indispensable. Even at his death, the world could not do without it for a single minute. A good test of any man’s (or woman’s) life is whether he makes even a small contribution which just one person cannot do without.

What about you? Are you making a difference?

Rick Warren in his book entitled, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Zondervan 2002), states the following. “The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It’s far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God. You were born *by* his purpose and *for* his purpose.”

Rick continues, “You are not an accident. Your birth was no mistake or mishap, and your life is no fluke of nature. Your parents may not have planned you, but God did. He was not at all surprised by your birth. In fact, he expected it. Long before you were conceived by your parents, you were conceived in the mind of God. He thought of you first.

It is not fate, nor chance, nor luck, nor coincidence that you are breathing at this very moment. You are alive because God wanted to create you! The Bible says, *‘The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me.’*”

Do you agree with this Biblical truth? Ask the Lord to help you with your unbelief. Your life is too valuable to God, to this world, to miss living with impact simply because you can’t get this truth into your heart. All things are possible to him who believes, according to the Bible. Why would someone not believe that her life is meaningful? Many have been told that they were a mistake. Many have believed the lie of the enemy that they are just a lump of flesh, suspended in space and time, to exist and then die. But this is not true.

The Bible says that you are made in the image and likeness of God. The Bible says that you are wonderfully and gloriously made. The prophet Jeremiah said that God called him to his life-long purpose from his mother’s womb. The Bible says that you’ve been in the mind of God from eternity past. A life this significant should certainly have purpose. And if it has purpose, then it can impact the world around it.

That’s right. Because God created you in purpose, you are significant in this world. The Kingdom of God is your domain. And as you move through this life in the Kingdom of Light, you spoil the works of darkness. As darkness flees, you stand in its vacated spot as light and salt. You bring the Light of Christ so that others may see, and you stand as salt against the rottenness of evil and despair. This is impact. This is your life.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming soon.
Pastor t.



Have you noticed an increase in locusts lately?

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

Are locusts invading your crops? You say you don’t have any crops? Okay, have you noticed trouble on the increase in your life? What am I talking about? I’m simply saying this. Without the power of restraint, anything that can pester you will pester you. You may call this Murphy’s Law—anything that can go wrong will go wrong. Or you may call this the Law of Entropy—everything is moving toward disorder; therefore, energy

must be expended to resist it. Or you may want to admit with me that *things just seem to go wrong when God is left out of the picture.*

Allow me to explain myself.

Consider Malachi 3:11 **“And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.”**

The word “rebuke” means to scold in a sharp way—to reprimand. When I entered high school in 1971, I signed up for football. I thought I would enjoy playing, but it didn’t turn out that way. Why? The coaching staff at my high school was very serious about winning; therefore, they didn’t put up with slackers like me. When I was reprimanded for missing a block or not hustling like I should, their rebuke would sting. In fact, it was down right humiliating at times.

When I left high school, I enlisted in the military. I was rebuked on many occasions while in training. But, I realized they were teaching me to survive in a hostile environment so I took the humiliation in stride.

I have received my share of reprimands in life.

Now if a man’s rebuke can bring such humiliation and fear, imagine what God’s rebuke can do? The verse before us says that God will rebuke the devourer for our sake. When we do what God demands of us, he stands the gap for us. He will watch over us and command the howling winds of life to cease. He will rebuke the pests of life. He can stop the enemies of life dead in their tracks just by his word.

In Haggai 1:6 it reads, **“Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages [to put it] into a bag with holes.”**

What is this verse saying? It is telling us that when the Israelites of Haggai’s day brought in wages, they never seemed to have enough. In other words, something was working against them. The devourer was having a hay day. But why was this? Disobedience was the culprit. They Israelites had ceased work on the temple and started making a life for themselves. Nothing seemed to go well—especially in the area of finances. God is telling the Israelites that until they returned to do what he asked them to do, the more they got the less they would have. They needed someone to rebuke the devourer of their financial gains.

The Bible is clear. When we do what God has called us to do, he will fight our battles for us. He will rebuke the very forces that come against us to destroy us. If we give the tithe to the Lord faithfully, he will multiply our 90 percent by keeping the thief from stealing it (John 10:10). If we obey his word and live for him, he will reward us by rebuking the thief. It pays to obey God.

Let me end where I began. Are troubles increasing in your life? Are your finances being eaten up without any gain? Are you giving God his portion? The tithe belongs to him not because he needs the money. The tithe is his to multiply back to us in harvest. He's not after your money. He's after your obedience. Can you trust him?

Let God rebuke the locusts of life. Just do what he asks you to do.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming with reward in his hands.

Pastor T.



The city of modern Tyre—is it doomed?

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

As I write this document (July 2006), the Lebanese city of Tyre is being blasted by Israeli bombs because the city—allegedly—is a Hezbollah strong hold.

If Israel is allowed to continue its fight against Hezbollah (which it has every right to do), Tyre could be destroyed. Has the city ever been destroyed? Yes. Are you familiar with its history?

Ezekiel (chapters 26, 27, and 28) prophesied against the city and its king thousands of years ago. Let me give you a brief on the city's history.

The city of Tyre is one of the oldest cities in the world. It was founded in 2750 B.C. by Phoenician sailors as a port city.

- The city was surrounded by a great wall to protect its inhabitants and its beautiful structures. Some of the ancient structures in Tyre include a Crusader Cathedral, a Roman Hippodrome that seated twenty thousand people, and a Phoenician Cemetery, which is the first of its kind found in

Lebanon. Another significant structure of Tyre was the Roman-built aqueduct which provided the city with its water.

- Because Tyre was such a beautiful and wealthy city, it was desired by other empires. The history of the city has a dark side that was plagued by war throughout its history. The first of these battles started in the sixth century B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon tried to conquer the city. He tried for thirteen years but Tyre stood up to his attempts. It is unknown if the mainland city was conquered with the residents taking refuge on the island or not.
- The second attempt came three hundred years later when Alexander the Great tried to take the city in the war between the Greeks and the Persians. He confined the city to the island for seven months. Because he could not reach the city, he built a bridge with the remains of the mainland city to reach the island. When he reached it he broke through the wall and in his rage he killed or sold the residents into slavery. The city changed hands again in 634 A.D. when the Islamic armies seized it. The last time the city was attacked was by the Crusaders. The city held up strong behind its wall until 1124 when they finally fell. The city was under different rule until after World War I when it was taken into present day Lebanon.
(http://www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/archaeology/sites/middle_east/tyre.html).

[For a brief time-line of Tyre see:

<http://phoenicia.org/phoeniciatimeline.html>]

Jesus visited Tyre during his day, and the Apostle Paul in his time walked its streets. In Ezekiel 26: 3-6 we read, “therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am against you, O Tyre, and I will bring many nations against you, like the sea casting up its waves. They will destroy the walls of Tyre and pull down her towers; I will scrape away her rubble and make her a bare rock. Out in the sea she will become a place to spread fishnets, for I have spoken, declares the Sovereign Lord. She will become plunder for the nations, and her settlements on the mainland will be ravaged by the sword. Then they will know that I am the Lord.” (NIV)

At the time these words were spoken by the prophet Ezekiel, the city of Tyre had not yet been taken by Alexander the Great. It stood impregnable in the Mediterranean Sea and had never been fully destroyed. I’m sure Ezekiel’s skeptics heard his words and laughed just like people today laugh at Bible prophecy. Keep in mind, though, God will have the last laugh. What Alexander the Great did to conquer Tyre is build a half-mile-long causeway to reach it. This is unimaginable even by modern engineering techniques; however when God says a city is going to be destroyed, it has no defenses against its conquerors.

Israel will prevail against the Hezbollah strong holds in Lebanon not because she is a superpower in the world. Israel will prevail against her

enemies because God has said that He will give her the land promised to her, and all her enemies who attempt to deny her this right will crumble to oblivion.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming soon because he said he would come again.

Pastor T.



No Such Thing...

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

Oxymoron-a combination of contradictory terms, also considered a paradox. It is usually reduced to two words that have an adverb-adjective or an adjective-noun relationship.

Example: Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. "Why then, O brawling love! O loving hate! O heavy lightness, serious vanity; Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms! Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health!" (1.1)...

www.georgiasouthern.edu/~dougt/terms.htm

Do they still teach literary terms in public schools? If so, then everyone should know that a “holy war” is an oxymoron and not a descriptive term of rationality. Shouldn’t he? If anything a “holy war” is a contradiction, a mismatch, an oxymoron whose actions defy the sensibilities of all civil societies across the globe.

In this oxymoron—“holy war”—there is certainly the hint, even the allusion, to the type of person who justifies it. *He is a moron*. There is nothing holy about aggression. There are times when it is just to defend and preserve a civil way-of-life from aggressors, but it is never right to pick fights, bully another into submission, or take something from another without permission. These are principles taught in kindergarten and reinforced in Sunday school. But many a grown man—some politicians,

some religious clerics—turn a deaf ear to its wrong and call it holy. But, as it has been said, “a rose by any other name...”

Case in point...

Regarding the recent cease fire between Israel and Hezbollah, Muslim leaders are quoted as saying that Allah intervened on Hezbollah’s behalf to lick the Israelis. I suppose Allah helps those who hide behind civilian shields and those who pick fights to start a war. For example, the *Toronto Star* dated August 17, 2006, reports these telling words of one “holy” man:

“Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in a message to Hezbollah leader Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, described the group's resistance against Israel's military onslaught as a ‘victory’ for Islam.

”Your unprecedented holy war and steadfastness are beyond the limits of my description. ‘It's a divine victory. It is a victory of Islam,’ Khamenei said in the message read by an announcer on Hezbollah's Al-Manar television.

“Hezbollah is heavily financed and backed by Iran's Shiite Muslim theocracy.

“Your victory was a victory for Islam. With God's help you were able to prove that military superiority is not (measured) in the number (of soldiers), planes, warships and tanks.

”Rather, it depends on the power of faith and holy war,’ Khamenei said.”

Am I to read Khamenei’s words and rejoice with the angels in heaven that another infidel has been butchered? Am I to stop what I’m doing at work, falling on my knees in grand gratitude that Hezbollah has scored another one for Islam’s victory over Jews and the Western Crusaders? God help us!

Pardon my stretch for an analogy; but even if there was no God, no Allah, no other “gods”—wouldn’t caring for one another in love no matter what our race, creed or politics be the right thing to do instead of killing each other for no other reason than points on a score card of victory for Islam?

Maybe this is the madness of the times. I’m afraid man will not continue on this planet much longer simply because he hates his fellowman so much that he will murder him to gain some points with his god. May God have mercy on our hateful souls.

You will need faith to survive this day of madness. I place my faith in the God who doesn't require I murder my brother, but on the contrary He is the God who became flesh and allowed Himself to be murdered on my behalf. That's a strange love in this day and time, but it is true love.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming soon, and the mess will be straightened out.

Pastor T.



Overview of the Festivals

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

Introduction of tonight's study...

God created the sun, moon, and the stars as signs and to regulate time for man. Our study has highlighted the word, "seasons" in Genesis 1:14 because it is the heart of our study. The word literally means, "Appointed Time(s)." From verse 14 we learn that Israel is commanded to mark her annual calendar with seven dates (Feasts). These seven appointed times are set aside as annual Festivals to teach Israel's posterity about *the first and second coming of their Messiah*. Messiah's first coming would be illustrated by the first four Feasts beginning in the New Year month of Nisan (March-April). The Feast of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and First Fruits are in the first month. The fourth Feast which is 50 days after First Fruits is Pentecost, and it speaks about Messiah's first coming also.

The last three Festivals are celebrated in the fall of the year (September-October) and speak about the Second Coming of Messiah. These four are the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths. Tonight we will overview these seven Feasts to prepare us for a more in depth study of each one, individually.

Begin the overview...

Point to remember: *The Festivals are blueprints through which God revealed His overall plan of redemption for both man and the earth following the fall of man in the Garden of Eden as well as the role that the Messiah would play in that redemption.*⁷ As spring represents new

⁷ Edward Chumey, *The Seven festivals of the Messiah*, (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers), 9.

beginnings or new life the first Festivals teach about the first coming of Messiah. The last Festivals of the year are in the fall and teach about the second return of Jesus. The fall of the year represents “culmination” which speaks beautifully of the return of Jesus. The return of our Lord is the summit of Christendom. Although there are four seasons in a year—winter, summer, spring, and fall—the Bible (usually) only recognizes two as being important: Spring time and harvest (fall). These are also called “seedtime” and “harvest.” Also, the “former and latter rains” are associated with seedtime and harvest. The former rains came to Israel before planting in the spring. The latter rain came in the fall of the year right before harvest to cause the harvest to flourish. Of course we know that the terms also refer to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh since the day of Pentecost (the last days) in Acts chapter two..

In Hosea 6:3 it is written, “...His coming forth is prepared as the latter and former rain unto the earth.” The “latter and former rain” in this passage is commonly interpreted and understood to be the coming of the Holy Spirit. God set up the Festivals in an *agricultural* context. God gave the natural for us to understand the spiritual (I Corinthians 15:46-47). If we cross-reference Hosea 6:3 with Joel 2:23, we see that the former rain is the Hebrew word *moreh* which means “teacher” and the word “moderately” in Joel 2:23, is the Hebrew word *tzedakah*, which means “righteousness” The teacher of righteousness was a term for the Messiah. *Yeshua* was the teacher of righteousness sent by God as can be seen in John 3:2. *Yeshua* was sent by God to the earth to faithfully teach us righteousness, just as God faithfully sends us the rain (Isaiah 55:10-11). The harvest (true believers in Messiah) is the product that the rain (the Messiah) produces.⁸

In Leviticus 23:2 it is written, “...the feasts of the Lord, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations...” The Hebrew term translated as convocation in Leviticus 23:2,4 is *miqra*, which means “a rehearsal” From this we see that God gave the Festivals to be yearly “rehearsals” of the future events in the redemption. In Deuteronomy 16:16, God instructed the people to come to Jerusalem three times a year to observe the Feasts. As they came, they observed ceremonies given by God that were performed in both the temple and the home. These ceremonies were twofold in nature. They looked forward and they looked backward. Many of these ceremonies and the specific instructions concerning what was done during these Feasts and how they were done can be found in the **Mishnah**, the oral teaching of Judaism.

Point to remember: All of the Festivals teach about your personal relationship with God and how you are to walk with Him as you grow in the knowledge of Him, from being a baby believer to a mature believer.

⁸ Ibid., 10.

Overview of the Spring Festivals...

Passover occurs in the first month of the religious calendar on the 14th day, Leviticus 23:5.

Unleavened Bread immediately follows the first day of Passover. It is observed in the first month from the 15th day to the 21st day, Leviticus 23:6-8.

The Feast of First Fruits of the barley harvest is observed during the week of Unleavened Bread. Anciently, on this day, sheaves of barley were waved before the Lord in a prescribed ceremony. Today, this Festival is not observed in traditional Judaism.

The Feast of Weeks is also known as Pentecost. Beginning on the Feast of First Fruits, we begin to count 50 days. This is called the counting of the omer. On the 50th day following the Feast of First Fruits is the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost, Leviticus 23:15-21). The Feast of Weeks is considered the conclusion to Passover. The season of Passover is not considered totally over until Pentecost is completed.

To be continued...

Pastor T. Dashner



The information that follows was taken from Edward Chumney's book entitled, ***The Seven Festivals of the Messiah***, (Shippensburg, PA: Treasure House, 2003 Sixth Printing).

Introduction:

- The Feast of Unleavened Bread is the 15th day of the month of Nisan, which is the day following Passover (*Pesach*). It is a seven-day festival to the Lord (Leviticus 23:6-7). On the 15th of Nisan and for the next seven days, God forbade the people to have any leavened bread in their houses.
- Our text for this lesson is Exodus 12:14-17.

Passover.

After the lamb was killed, the blood was to be put on the doorposts. The lamb was to be roasted in fire and eaten with *matzah* (unleavened bread) and bitter herbs. God gave a ceremony of searching and removing leaven from the house prior to the festival of Unleavened Bread in preparation for the festival. In Hebrew, this ceremony is called *Bedikat HaMetz*, which means “the search for leaven.” The ceremony is as follows: The preparation for searching and removing the leaven from the house actually begins before Passover. First, the wife thoroughly cleans the house to remove all leaven from it. In the Bible, leaven is most often symbolic of sin.

The spiritual application of Unleavened Bread... Spiritually, the believers in the Messiah *Yeshua* are the house of God (Hebrews 3:6; I Peter 2:5; I Timothy 3:15; Ephesians 2:19). Leaven (sin) is to be cleansed out of our house, which is our body (I Corinthians 3: 16-17; 6:19-20; II Corinthians 6:15-18). In cleaning the house, the wife is instructed to purposely leave ten small pieces of leaven (bread) in the house. Then the father takes the children, along with a candle, a wooden spoon, a feather, and a piece of linen cloth, and searches through the house for the ten pieces of leaven. By nightfall on the day before Passover, a final and comprehensive search is performed. At this time, the house is completely dark except for the candles. Once the father finds the leaven (bread), he sets the candle down by the leaven and lays the wooden spoon beside the leaven. Then he uses the feather to sweep the leaven onto the spoon. Without touching the leaven, he takes the feather, spoon, and leaven, wraps them in a linen cloth, and casts them out of the door of the house. The next morning (the 14th of Nisan), he goes into the synagogue and puts the linen cloth and its contents into a fire to be burned.

More spiritual application... Spiritually, we are to cleanse the leaven (sin) from our houses (lives) by allowing the Holy Spirit to reveal to us, through the knowledge of *Yeshua* and the scriptures, the sin that is in our lives. It is only through God’s Word that we are able to identify sin in our lives as it is written in Psalm 119:105, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” So the spiritual understanding of the candle is that it represents the Word of God. The feather represents the Holy Spirit. Even though we have the Word of God, we need the Spirit of God to illuminate the entire Bible to us (I Corinthians 2:11-14).

Messianic fulfillment... The spoon represents the tree that *Yeshua* died upon (Deuteronomy 21:22-23). The leaven (sin) was swept on the spoon (the tree) as part of the ceremony. Likewise, our sin was swept or cast upon *Yeshua* (II Corinthians 5:21) when *Yeshua* died upon the tree. The leaven (*Yeshua* upon the tree) was then wrapped

in linen and *Yeshua* was cast out of His house (His body) and went to hell, which is a place of burning (Luke 16:19-24). *Yeshua* fulfilled the part of the

ceremony where the father took the linen cloth and its contents and casts it into the fire to be burned.

Body:

➤ The 15th of Nisan marks the beginning of a seven-day feast period when Israel was to eat bread without leaven in remembrance of their baking unleavened bread in their haste to escape Egypt. The primary theme of this feast is the purging out of leaven. Historically, there are two notable events that happened on this day. (1) The Exodus journey beginning from Egypt. In Deuteronomy 16:3. the bread is referred to as the “bread of affliction.” (2) The burial of *Yeshua* after His crucifixion, who is the Bread of Life (John 6:35).

- The festivals are **fixed appointments (*mo'ed*) of God specifying what He will perform and the exact time He will perform it.** The Jews had to hurry to put *Yeshua's* body in the ground because the Sabbath was drawing near. This Sabbath was a high Sabbath and the first day of Unleavened Bread (Nisan 15). This can be found in (John 19:31). This would mean that *Yeshua* died on the 14th of Nisan, the day of Passover. *Yeshua* was in the sepulcher the day following His crucifixion, which was the 15th of Nisan, the first day of Unleavened Bread.
- The feast of Unleavened Bread was so much a part of Passover that the names of Passover and Unleavened Bread were used interchangeably or almost synonymously (Luke 22:1).
- The feast was to be kept seven days (Exodus 12: 15-19). Seven is the number of perfection or completeness. The believer who keeps this feast is to keep it fully unto the Lord and set himself aside completely to Him. This speaks of sanctification in a general sense.
- The Feast of Unleavened Bread is a high Sabbath day. A high Sabbath in Hebrew is called a *shabbaton*. During Passover, there is an extra Sabbath besides the weekly Sabbath. These Sabbaths are called high Sabbaths. The high Sabbath of Unleavened Bread can be seen in John 19:31.
- Unleavened bread is used for consecration and separation. It is also anointed with oil. The believers in the Messiah are to be consecrated and separated to do the work God has called us to do and to live a life that is holy unto Him. If we do this, the anointing of the Holy Spirit of God will rest upon our lives.

Conclusion:

Spiritually, the feast is kept in sincerity and truth. Sincerity involves purity and serving the Lord with a pure heart. It involves putting away the sin in our lives, and separating ourselves from all evil that has a corrupting influence in the life of a believer in *Yeshua*. Historically, Israel learned that keeping the feast meant a complete separation from Egypt's religion, bondage, food, and slavery, as well as its worldly glory, wisdom, and splendor.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming soon.

Pastor T.



Series continued, “Appointed Time(s)”

Page 1 of 2

Text, *The Seven Festivals of the Messiah* by Edward Chumney (Shippensburg, PN: Destiny Image, Sixth Printing 2003).

Introduction:

The Festival of Pentecost concludes the study of the *spring festivals*. The spring festivals begin with Passover in the month of Nisan. Two others follow in close succession—Feast of Unleavened Bread and Feast of the First Fruits. Pentecost (Greek word means fifty) occurs 50 days after the Feast of First Fruits and concludes the spring time festivals.

The spring festivals are applicable in three dimensions: (1) They are historic to the nation of Israel. (2) They are fulfilled in the Messiah. (3) And they describe how a believer is to walk before God in the world. To natural Israel, Passover was their freedom from the bondage of Egypt. Unleavened Bread was the separation from the land of Egypt into the immersion (baptism) into the Red Sea and the Cloud in the wilderness. Finally, God led the people to Mount Sinai where they experienced Pentecost and God revealed Himself to the people in a deeper and greater way than He ever did previously.

Messianic Fulfillment:

The spring festivals were fulfilled by Yeshua, Messiah, who was our Passover Lamb, died on the day of Passover. He was without sin and is the

Bread of Life. Yeshua was in the sepulcher on the day of Unleavened Bread, and He was the kernel of wheat that was buried in the earth. Yeshua arose as First Fruits of the barley harvest, He Himself being the first of those to rise from the dead and receive a resurrected body. Finally, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon all flesh during the feast of Pentecost to gather all believers in the Messiah to be God's spring harvest in the earth. As these four feasts describe in detail the significant events during the first coming of Messiah when He came as the suffering Messiah, Messiah ben Joseph, to redeem both man and the earth back to God following the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, we will find that the fall festivals give us tremendous insight and understanding concerning the events of Yeshua's second coming. Then He will return as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and come back to earth as the kingly Messiah, Messiah ben David, to rule and reign on earth during the Messianic age or the Millennium.

Spiritual Application:

Every time a person receives Yeshua the Messiah as his own Savior, he spiritually experiences Passover. He is to flee Egypt (the world's system and ways) and trust in the Messiah, the Lamb of God, and allow Yeshua to be the doorpost of his heart. As believers, we are then to seek to live holy lives before God and experience Unleavened Bread. Just as Yeshua arose from the dead, we are to consider our former ways dead to us and experience the newness of life in the Messiah. Once we do this, we can be immersed

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in the Holy Spirit and have the power of God (the anointing) in our lives. At that time, God will begin to take us on a spiritual journey through the wilderness of life.

In the process of experiencing life's bitter disappointments and struggles, if we keep our eyes upon God, He will take us from Passover to Pentecost where He will reveal His ways and His Word, the Bible, to us in a greater way, but He also will refine our faith like fine flour just as was done to the wheat.

Meanwhile, if we put our entire trust in Jesus through our spiritual journey in the wilderness of life as God refines our faith and reveals Himself to us in a greater way, our spiritual journey will not end in the wilderness of life. Instead God will take us forward to spiritually experience the fall festivals and our spiritual promised land. It is when we spiritually experience the fall festivals, especially the Feast of Tabernacles, and enter into our spiritual promised land that God will anoint our lives for Him in an awesome way as we live and serve Him. We will then experience the

greatest joy in our entire lives. Joy unspeakable! This is what the Feast of Tabernacles is all about. It is called “the season of our joy” and this joy is what we have to look forward to as we read about the fall festivals in the following lessons.

**Covenant at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19)
covenant 31:31-33**

- The 50th day
- Commandments of God written on of God written tablets of stone (Exodus 24:12) (Jeremiah 31:33)
- Written by the Finger of God (Exodus 31:18) Spirit of God
- 3,000 slain (Exodus 32:1-8, 26-28)
- Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:11)
- Law (Rom 11:26)

(Romans 11:26; Heb)

Jeremiah’s

- The 50th day
- Commandments on our hearts
- Written by the
- 3,000 live
- The Spirit of the
- Mount Zion



A Power Gift...

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

More than 50 years ago at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, a young sociology professor assigned his class to a city slum to interview 200 boys. They were instructed to predict the boys’ futures on the basis of their findings.

Shocked at what they found in the slums, the students estimated that 90 percent of the boys interviewed would someday serve time in prison.

Twenty-five years passed. The same professor asked another class to try to locate the survivors of the 200 boys and compare what had happened. Of 180 of the original boys located, only four had ever been to jail.

Why had the predictions not turned out? A common denominator was sought in their lives, some value or influence that may have marked the difference. Through more interviews, it was found that over 100 of the

men remembered having the same high-school teacher, a Miss O'Rourke, who had been a tremendous influence on them at the time. After a long search, Sheila O'Rourke was found in a nursing home in Memphis, now 70 years old. When asked for her explanation, she was puzzled. "All I can say," she concluded, "is that I loved every one of them."

Many times believers ask me how to determine spiritual gifts. Believers want to know what their gift is to develop and use it. That's wonderful. But, I think we miss the point of "giftedness." God has gifted us by His Holy Spirit. That is true; however, many believers want "power gifts"—miracles, healings, signs and wonders. May I share with you the greatest gift a believer may possess?

As a pastor with years of experience in local church ministry, may I share some observations? The older I get, the more I'm convinced that the greatest force, power, and impact a Christian can have on another human being is a work of love. That's right—not just abstract love, but love in action is powerful and changes lives. Instead of looking for your gift, start loving people with acts (not just words) of loving-kindness. Melt your enemies with the love of God working through you.

Agreed. My love which is human, mortal, and limited comes up short when stretched to my enemies. That's when I say, "Lord, love them through me." God wants a surrendered vessel. He wants a vessel that will fill and empty with His love at His prompting. God wants to pour Himself through the believer to reach the world. What say you? Will you be His vessel? His love is powerful and changes lives forever.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming soon and very soon.

Pastor T.



The Paradox of Predestination v. Free Will

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

For centuries men have debated the paradox between *Predestination* and *Free will*. The debate raises two questions: has God *predetermined* my life

to the point that I am not responsible for my actions? Or does my ability to *freely choose* nullify God's over-ruling hand in my life? The debate continues today, and we are no closer to solving it; however, there is a moderate stand that makes sense out of both positions.

I want to share the moderate position with a few simple illustrations.

First, allow me to state the extreme view of Predestination (extreme Calvinism). This view says that God, since eternity past, has predestined our lives and everything that comes into our lives—be it good or evil—is from Him. We have no choice (Free Will) in the matter. This extreme view says that God is ultimately responsible for our response to circumstances. We have no control over them; therefore, we are not responsible for what we do. This can be illustrated by the following report:

Who says doctrine doesn't have social effects? Try this from a staff reporter for the Wall Street Journal: 'Iran must have the wildest drivers in the Middle East. It is a country of fatalists who believe that all accidents are preordained by Allah. Thus highway safety is really in higher hands and not of concern to mere motorists. Judged by the accident rate in Iran, it would seem to be a vengeful deity indeed.' *Eternity*, October, 1977, p. 12.

Secondly, allow me to state the extreme view of *Free Will*. It is called *Neotheism* and has exalted free will at the expense of divine sovereignty. This group argues against the historical position that God infallibly knows all things, including all future events.

The position of both extremes may be illustrated as follows.

The story is told of a group of theologians who were discussing the tension between predestination and free will. Things became so heated that the group broke up into two opposing factions.

But one man, not knowing which to join, stood for a moment trying to decide. At last he joined the predestination group. 'Who sent you here?' they asked. 'No one sent me,' he replied. 'I came of my own free will.' 'Free will!' they exclaimed. 'You can't join us! You belong with the other group!'

So he followed their orders and went to the other clique. There someone asked, 'When did you decide to join us?' The young man replied, 'Well, I didn't really decide--I was sent here.' 'Sent here!' they shouted. 'You can't join us unless you have decided by your own free will!' *Today In The Word*, August, 1989, p. 35.

Now allow me to voice a moderate position between the two extremes.

In regards to Predestination, the moderate view is best illustrated in the words of Norman Geisler.

If God made free creatures, and if it is good to be free, then the origin of evil is in the misuse of freedom. This is not hard to understand. We all enjoy the freedom to drive, but many abuse this freedom and drive recklessly. Yet we should not blame the government that gives us the license to drive for all the evil we do with our cars. Those whose *irresponsible* driving kills others are *responsible* for what has happened. Remember: the government that gave us the permission to drive has also informed us how to drive safely (Norman Geisler, *Chosen But Free*, Bethany House Publishers, second edition 2001, pp. 22-23).

Also, consider this example by A. W. Tozer:

In Knowledge of the Holy, A.W. Tozer attempts to reconcile the seemingly contradictory beliefs of God's sovereignty and man's free will:

An ocean liner leaves New York bound for Liverpool. Its destination has been determined by proper authorities. Nothing can change it. This is at least a faint picture of sovereignty.

On board the liner are scores of passengers. These are not in chains, neither are their activities determined for them by decree. They are completely free to move about as they will. They eat, sleep, play, lounge about on the deck, read, talk, altogether as they please; but all the while the great liner is carrying them steadily onward toward a predetermined port.

Both freedom and sovereignty are present here, and they do not contradict. So it is, I believe, with man's freedom and the sovereignty of God. The mighty liner of God's sovereign design keeps its steady course over the sea of history.

I think the moderate view of free will can best be illustrated in the simply logic of D. L. Moody, an evangelist of years past.

The elect are the “whosoever will(s),” the non-elect are the “whosoever won't(s).”

In conclusion, God is sovereign and has predestined us to his salvation. This is true on its face; however, God does not make robots. He has given us a free will. We are made in his image, and he is a free moral agent; therefore, so are we free to choose. Both positions are truths that are limited by our mortal understanding. Although both positions are taken to the extreme, a moderate position of both helps ease the paradox to our limited grasp of understanding. God has called me to salvation, and I have freely chosen to receive it through Jesus Christ.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming soon.

Pastor T.



Reciprocity

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

Reciprocity is our word for today. One dictionary defines the word: *to give correspondingly*. If you lived in Old Testament times, you might have related reciprocity in judicial terms like, “an eye for an eye.” If you are a student of the New Testament, you might associate reciprocity with the spiritual principle— “...whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.” If you view the world through physics, you might relate it to Newton’s third law of motion—to every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. If you...I think you get the point.

I am, like you, philosophical by nature. And one philosophy I review often is this. I am *today* what I planted *yesterday*. So if I don’t like what I’ve become, then I need to change the seeds I’m planting today. In relating this concept to reciprocity, I want to say this. What I plant in the lives of others is what I’ll receive in return. Let me illustrate, please. If I pass you on the street with a smile and favorable greeting, more than likely, you will reciprocate with a similar greeting; however if I smack you, I can expect a surprise greeting.

I want to carry this thought a little further. If reciprocity and sowing and reaping are valid principles, is it any wonder why so many American youth are so quick to resort to violence when things don't go their way. Cal Thomas writes, "Why should young people take life seriously when their overworked, aborting, day-care, euthanasia culture does not? Life is so cheap, relationships are so meaningless—children get the message. When you mix the ingredients for cake, you get cake. When you mix the volatile ingredients of corrupted culture, vulgar entertainment and broken, loveless families, you get child killers." Well, maybe we should read the last part of Cal's words as hyperbole (not every unloved child grows up to be a killer); nevertheless, we do reap what we sow into the lives of our children.

Kurt Thompson, a Washington, D.C.-area psychiatrist whose clients include adolescents, sees today's teens suffering from 'a horrid sense of disconnection.' They're connected technically through the Internet, but they're disconnected relationally. Too many parents, he says, think by the time their children become teen-agers their job is almost done and that other forces will complete the shaping of young minds and spirits. Oh sure, we can put metal detectors at the schoolhouse door, but who makes mental and moral detectors.⁹

Having served a number of years in law enforcement, I'm well aware that enforcing existing laws to curtail youth violence does not solve the problem. We were told in the 90s that the Brady bill would protect us against gun violence. It didn't. We were told that passing more anti-gun and anti-violence laws would reduce teen violence. That hasn't worked either. The reality is we already have more than enough anti-gun laws on the books, so why should we pass more legislation? Federal prosecutors are reluctant to prosecute the existing anti-gun and anti-violence laws. The answer to violence is not more regulations and more legislation. The answer is simple but requires work. The work involves sowing positive messages about the value of human life. The work involves sowing seeds like, "love thy brother as thy self." The work involves sowing seeds like

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kindness, selflessness, caring, truth, honor, "giving honor to whom honor is due." These seeds produce like kind.

⁹ <http://www.jewishworldreview.com/cols/thomas042699.asp>.

I want to encourage you dear Christian. Although our way of life is old fashioned and spurned by many modernists, it's still the only way. Jesus, Himself, said that He was the Way. Through His love, we address the world His way—the only way—the way of the Book. God's Word teaches us that laying down our lives for each other, we are living the way of the Cross, and the Cross of Calvary is the best way to stem the violence. A changed heart leads to a changed way of life, which can change the world for better; therefore, reciprocate with good and note the return of a good corresponding action.

Terry Dashner.



Relativism...

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.com)

His name is John G. Stackhouse, Jr. His book is entitled, *Humble Apologetics Defending the Faith Today* (Oxford University Press, 2002). And his message is loud and clear. Christianity will hold up to any religion, but what's the point if I win the argument for faith in Christ and fail to demonstrate the very humility of Christ in my defense? In other words, I can win the argument but lose the endorsement—"I don't care that you answered all my questions, your arrogance is repulsive."

Dr. Stackhouse's call for humility in apologetics is well made; however, I'd like to comment on his words about *relativism*. If you are my age (51) or older, you might remember Ray Stevens' song from 1970 entitled, "Everything is Beautiful." After the song's opening Refrain, Stevens sings these words, "There is none so blind as he who will not see. We must not close our minds, we must let our thoughts be free." I have no disrespect for Mr. Stevens, but everything in life is not beautiful. Some things, even religions, can be ugly. For example, any religion that condones the beheading of infidels is ugly and cannot be labeled "beautiful"—thrown into the same mix of religions that seek truth and peace.

In chapter one of his book, Dr. Stackhouse quotes Allan Bloom who writes, "There is one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of: almost

every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative...The students' backgrounds are as various as America can provide. Some are religious, some atheists; some are to the Left, some to the Right; some intend to be scientists, some humanists or professionals or businessmen; some are poor, some rich. They are unified only in their relativism and in their allegiance to equality...

“Relativism is necessary to openness; and this is the virtue, the only virtue, which all primary education for more than fifty years has dedicated itself to inculcating. Openness...is the great insight of our times. The true believer is the real danger. The study of history and our culture teaches that the entire world was mad in the past; men always thought they were right, and that led to wars, persecutions, slavery, xenophobia, racism, and chauvinism. The point is not to correct the mistakes and really be right; rather it is not to think you are right at all.”

America, certainly at the University level and in politics, has become a society that prefers the radical notion that everything and everyone is right and never wrong, for fear that a value statement might be made and offend someone's group. (Lord help us please.) Again Dr. Stackhouse writes, “In introductory religion courses, many frequently opine that the way this or that religion treats women appalls them. Yet in the very next paragraph of an essay, such students commonly switch back with what they intend to be a relativistic judgment, namely, that they would probably agree with that religion's understanding of gender if they had been raised in it. This latter admission seems to imply that the students' disgust toward what they judge to be sexism is nothing more than an effect of their particular upbringing. Morality, in sum, is nothing more than a social construction and not reflective of any objective moral order that lies beyond any person's or any civilization's preference.”

My I ask you a question? Do you believe that everything in life is relative? If you do, then you must believe that there may be many answers to the equation— $2 + 2 = (4)$ and that Nazism is as “good” as Judaism. If I like the color blue and you like red, neither one of us is wrong because of our choice. It's a matter of taste. And tastes are subjective. But in the case of mathematics (and God's Law), there is objective truth. There can only be one final answer.

In closing this piece, I must say this. It's very tempting to embrace the “feel good” message of Ray Stevens' song, but in truth not everything in comparison is beautiful.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is truly beautiful and coming again to set the record straight, objectively.

Pastor T.



A secret servant, is this possible?

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

I read the Bible with awe. And just about the time I think I have it all figured out, something surprises me; for example, the words of Jesus to Nicodemus in John chapter three. The NIV reads, “Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, ‘Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him’” (John 3:1-2).

Why do these two scriptures challenge me? Before I answer, let me begin by quoting John 19:38-39, “Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews. With Pilate’s permission, he came and took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night” (NIV). I’m challenged by the thought that Joseph of Arimathea was a *secret* disciple, and Nicodemus came to Jesus by night (under cover of darkness). Two important men and both were subdued followers of Jesus Christ.

Is it possible to be a “secret” follower of Jesus?

Although Nicodemus came to Jesus by cover of darkness, he seemed bold in his curiosity about eternal life through Jesus Christ. While other Pharisees were plotting to kill Jesus, Nicodemus came to him to learn more about him. Even as a member of the Sanhedrin that put Jesus on trial, Nicodemus boldly protested against the course they were plotting. Obviously, Nicodemus was partial to Jesus and willing to stand up for him. But, one is left with the impression that Nicodemus could have done more to support Jesus. And, he didn’t.

It is possible to be a “wise” follower of Jesus.

I am alarmed by the thought that many Christians conduct their daily lives as *secret* disciples of Jesus; however, I'm not alarmed by secret disciples who are, in actuality, *wise* disciples. Matthew 10:16 reads, "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves" (NIV). In the Bible a snake usually represents wickedness and evil, but Jesus tells his 12 disciples to be as shrewd as snakes. What does that mean?

In reading the stories about Joseph, a son of Jacob, and Moses, I'm made to realize the wisdom in cunningness. Let me explain. Joseph was given a wife by Pharaoh. Genesis 41:45 reads, "Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-Paneah and gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, to be his wife" (NIV). Joseph has just been promoted by Pharaoh to second-in-command of all Egypt. Joseph received this favor because he had served faithfully the one, true God Jehovah. If Joseph had been a religious zealot without true wisdom, he might have replied, "Wait a minute Pharaoh! I'm one of the son's of Abraham. I worship the God of heaven, not the gods of On. I'm not going to receive the woman you are giving me. She is a heathen. Her daddy is a pagan priest. He might taint my worship of the one true God and cause me to sin. I can't marry into that family. I'll choose my own wife—thank you very much."

Of course you know that if Joseph had responded that way, Pharaoh would have probably done away with him. Instead Joseph used tact. He responded in wisdom instead of religious zeal. Sure there is a time for religious zeal, and there is a time for cunningness. It takes the wisdom of God to know when and how to employ one over the other.

We see the cunningness of a wise disciple in the life of Moses as well. Moses on the run from his murder in Egypt stops to help some young ladies of Midian. Exodus 2:16 reads, "Now a priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came to draw water and fill the troughs to water their father's flock." Moses intervenes on the girls' behalf and is welcomed into their father's home. The priest of Midian gives Moses one of his daughters for marriage. Here again, what if Moses had refused the offer? Things would not have worked out for him as they did.

Getting back to my original question, is it possible to be a secret disciple? It all depends on how you define "secret disciple." If a follower of Jesus wants to live a worldly life, remaining seated when he should be standing up for Jesus, and even denying Christ before his friends, then he is compromising his witness for Jesus. In this regard a "silent disciple" is an oxymoron. It is impossible to follow Jesus with one's whole being and at the same time deny him. Paul says that a water fountain can spew forth either sweet water or salt water but not both at the same time.

On the other hand, there is a difference between being a silent disciple and being wise with your witness. God may have you in a position where it takes godly wisdom to know when to share your faith. Obviously if you are working for someone who is paying you to work, you shouldn't neglect your work to talk about your testimony in Christ. Sometimes in our religious zeal we are so committed to the act of witnessing that we begin to see people not for who they are but as numbers on a spread sheet—a quota of people we've witnessed to that day.

I think people resent being the objects of religious zeal. I think people want others to know them as real people, with real lives, with real doubts about faith. I think developing a relationship with people in an understanding, non-condemning, and kind way is the wisdom that helps people come to know Jesus. I think religious zeal without wisdom comes across like a salesman that pressures people to sign on a dotted line. In this case, silence is golden and wisdom is paramount.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming soon.

Pastor T.



It will become newer...

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

I purchased my first “new” vehicle in 1977. Not only was it new, but it came from the factory as a special order. It was a Chevrolet pick-up. Daily I went through a ritual of moving it around the parking lot to keep it from being damaged by other parked vehicles and washing or wiping it down incessantly to keep it free of dust and pine-tree sap. I even decorated it with floor mats that said in raised, white lettering, “Keep on trucking.”

I will never forget the feeling of euphoria when I slid inside the cab, turned over the ignition, and eased down the country roads of North Carolina ever so slowly to avoid the seasonal chug-holes. It was my first new vehicle.

Over time, of course, the interior fragrance vanished, and the truck was no longer new. It wasn't long before the paint took a few gravel hits, and the

grill became tarnished with stubborn “bug-goo.” As the “newness” began to fade, no matter how well I cleaned it inside or out, it just wasn’t the same.

How many of you know that new vehicles get old and lose their appeal? Wouldn’t it be nice if everything stayed new, getting newer as the days passed?

In Revelation John tells us in verse five of chapter 21, “And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new...” (KJV). The context of chapter 21 speaks about the eternal state of things. John talks about a **new** heaven, a **new** earth, the **New** Jerusalem, and God Himself promising to make all things **new**.

Essence of today’s document...

Have you considered the life that is to come? The Bible declares that physical life is not final, but will transition to another place, to another city, to another state of existence where all things will be made new and will continue getting newer. This boggles the human mind. How can our lives that are subject to wearing out with time, live for all time and eternity while getting newer? God makes this happen. Would you like to know how?

I will share three things regarding the transition of this life into the world that is to come.

- First of all the transition from this life to the New Jerusalem is **through faith in Jesus Christ only**.
- Secondly, the transition from this life to the next is **immediate**.
- Thirdly, according to the Bible, the transition **brings a reality of existence that will never grow old**.

First of all the transition from this life to the next is possible only through faith in Jesus Christ. In John 14:6 Jesus said that He was the only way to the Father. I agree that this is a controversial statement and raises eye brows among the enlightened. In a pluralistic society such as ours, every way to God is tolerated and accepted, it seems. But Jesus Himself made this statement. He is the only way. He and the Father are so close that to get to the Father one must go through Jesus. I believe that Jesus is the only way to God because I walked His way when I was just a young boy. Through the many years that have passed since then, God has revealed Himself to me and has become my all in all.

He began His ministry by being hungry, yet He is the Bread of Life. Jesus ended His earthly ministry by being thirsty, yet He is the Living Water.

Jesus was weary, yet He is our rest. Jesus paid tribute, yet He is the King.
Jesus was accused of having a demon, yet He cast out demons.
Jesus wept, yet He wipes away our tears.
Jesus was sold for thirty pieces of silver, yet He redeemed the world.
Jesus was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, yet He is the Good Shepherd.
Jesus died, yet by His death He destroyed the power of death.

[Gregory of Nazianzus, A.D. 381.](#)

Thinking of the fullness and duration of this wonderful life, W. B. Hinson, a great preacher of a past generation, spoke from his own experience just before he died. He said, "I remember a year ago when a doctor told me, 'You have an illness from which you won't recover.' I walked out to where I live 5 miles from Portland, Oregon, and I looked across at that mountain that I love. I looked at the river in which I rejoice, and I looked at the stately trees that are always God's own poetry to my soul. Then in the evening I looked up into the great sky where God was lighting His lamps, and I said, 'I may not see you many more times, but Mountain, I shall be alive when you are gone; and River, I shall be alive when you cease running toward the sea; and Stars, I shall be alive when you have fallen from your sockets in the great down pulling of the material universe!' "

Jesus is the only way that leads to life everlasting. In Christ, I shall live forever. The Bible says that His life is the "new and living way." Not only does faith in Jesus make new my spirit, He keeps adding newness daily (II Corinthians 5:17) and He will one day make all things new.

Secondly, the transition is immediate. [Paul said that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord \(II Corinthians 5:8\).](#) The word "maranatha" is a Syriac expression that means: "our Lord comes." It was used as a greeting in the early church. When believers gathered or parted, they didn't say "hello" or "goodbye" but "Maranatha!" If we had the same upward look today, it would revolutionize the church. O that God's people had a deepening awareness of the imminent return of the Savior!

While on a South Pole expedition, British explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton left a few men on Elephant Island, promising that he would return. Later, when he tried to go back, huge icebergs blocked the way. But suddenly, as if by a miracle, an avenue opened in the ice and Shackleton was able to get through. His men, ready and waiting, quickly scrambled aboard. No sooner had the ship cleared the island than the ice crashed together behind them. Contemplating their narrow escape, the explorer said to his men, "It was fortunate you were all packed and ready to go!" They replied, "We never gave up hope. Whenever the sea was clear of ice, we rolled up our sleeping bags and reminded each other, 'The boss may come today.'"

The hymn writer Horatius Bonar exhorted us "to be ready for the last moment by being ready at every moment...so attending to every duty that, let Him come when He may, He finds the house in perfect order, awaiting His return." The trump may sound anytime. How important for us as Christians to be "packed and ready to go!"

As you leave home today, don't say goodbye -- say "Maranatha!"

Our Daily Bread.

Thirdly, the transition is to a place and experience that never grows old. C.S. Lewis tells us in the closing of his final Narnia story "The Last Battle," where the children have been brought through a rail crash into the real Narnia that is to be their home forever. The key sentences are these:

Then Aslan [the Christ-like lion] turned to them and said: "You do not yet look so happy as I mean you to be...all of you are (as you used to call it in the Shadowlands) dead. The term is over; the holidays have begun. The dream is ended; this is the morning."

...We can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.

Amy Plantinga highlights this truth when she writes:

Because 'heaven is a progressive state,' the heavenly joy of the saints, and even of the triune God, will forever continue to increase...Saints can look forward to an unending expansion of their knowledge and love of God, as their capacities are stretched by what they receive...there is no intrinsic limit to their joy in heaven...As the saints continue to increase in knowledge and love of God, God receives more and more glory. This heavenly reciprocity will never cease, because the glory God deserves is infinite, and the capacity of the saints to perceive God's glory and praise him for it is ever increasing.

God is going to make all things new. All things will continue to be new, never growing old. We will one day leave this world and receive the complete salvation of our body—justified, sanctified, and glorified forever. The transition from this life to the next will be immediate. We will move into a realm where Jesus is seated on the throne. And the capacity for us to receive from Him throughout eternity will continue in the newness of His being forever and ever.

What about you? Have you made the necessary arrangements? Jesus Christ is ready to receive you now. Come to the new life in Christ Jesus.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming soon.

Pastor T.



Shaking it won't change it...

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

Do you let the Bible read you or do you merely read the Bible? The Bible is like an anvil and the cares of life are like hammers, small and large, striking against it. The anvil never fails. It never, ever breaks by the hammers' blows; however, that's not the case with the hammers. Hammers break.

We may know the Bible well. We may know its warnings about moving in a certain direction; nevertheless, we do it anyway. Then we go to some obscure passage of scripture to justify our reason for doing what we wanted to do. Granted, a man or woman can justify just about anything by reading into the Bible what is not there.

The right way to read the Bible is to let the Bible read you. One should go to the Word of God without preconceived notions about what one wants out of life. Approach the Word humbly, asking the Holy Spirit to use His Word to mold and shape you according to His will. One can try and make the Bible say what isn't there to justify what one wants. Or you can allow the Bible to read you, cleanse you, and make you in God's image. It all about what He wants for you and me.

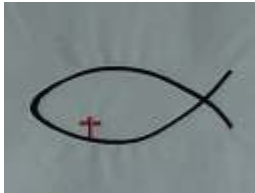
Consider this illustration from E. Schuyler English. English writes, "A man who lived on Long Island was able one day to satisfy a lifelong ambition by purchasing for himself a very fine barometer. When the instrument arrived at his home, he was extremely disappointed to find that the indicating needle appeared to be stuck, pointing to the sector marked 'HURRICANE.' After shaking the barometer very vigorously several times, its new owner sat down and wrote a scorching letter to the store from which he had purchased the instrument. The following morning on the way to his office in New York, he mailed the letter.

“That evening he returned to Long Island to find not only the barometer missing, but his house also. The barometer's needle had been right--there was a hurricane!”

When the Bible tells you something that you don't want to hear, don't shake it and try to change it. The Bible isn't broken, but our lives are. God is the only mechanic that can repair our lives. And sometimes it's painful getting repaired, but—just as my mother used to say—go ahead and take the painful correction. It's good for you. And mother always knows best. So does God.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is coming again.

Pastor T.



Shoot the Messenger...

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.com)

Someone once said that the message is never made inoperative by killing the messenger.

The story is told of a missionary trying to connect with the basic understanding of an indigenous people by drawing a simple chart of salvation. The chart showed men and women ascending to heaven with Jesus at the resurrection, while those who rejected Jesus were shown to descend into hell. The chart so shocked the natives that they burned the chart and declared the message no longer true.

Here again, you can deny the truth. You can ignore the truth. But you can not change truth by simply refusing to believe it. In other words, you can't do away with the message by simply doing away with the messenger.

In Acts chapter four we read beginning with verse 16, "... 'What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is manifest to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. (17) But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to any one in this name.' (18) So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus" (RSV).

The religious authorities were very concerned with the balance of power in Jerusalem. If the disciple were allowed to preach and help people in the name and authority of Jesus, civil authority would be threatened, the people would surely riot, and Rome would certainly intervene with a heavy hand. The religious leaders would lose control. What is the answer? They decided to react as opposition to the name of Jesus has reacted for the past 2000 years. They tried to silence the messengers. But as history tells us you can warn the messengers not to speak without experiencing the dire consequences, you can whip the messenger until he bleeds, you can burn his Bibles, you can do anything you wish to the messenger, but it does not silence the message. Truth can not be destroyed.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus is the message who is alive and coming soon.

Pastor T



Some Basic Stuff...

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.org)

This particular scripture fascinates me. The scripture is Colossians 1:27 (NIV) and reads, "To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." The words, "...Christ in you," blows my mind. How is it possible for God's only begotten Son, the Second Person of the Godhead Trinity, to live inside me? Why would He, God of all creation, want to live inside me anyway? He's taking a big risk hanging out with me. I blunder too easily. I've been known to blurt out caustic diatribes at inopportune times, especially when things don't go well for me. And I certainly break down too easily when I should be standing up to be counted. Why would He bother Himself baby-setting me? After contemplating this scriptural truth for some time, I have come to this conclusion: It's a mystery to me, known only to God. But I believe it is truth; therefore, I accept it by faith. Oh the wonders of God's amazing grace!

I accept it by faith because I'm viewing it from God's perspective, from His Word. His Word (Romans 16:25-27) defines the term—mystery—this way: "...according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, (26) but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him—(27) to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen." According to the Apostle Paul, a mystery is something God wanted to reveal to His people, but it was held back until an appointed time. At the appointed time, God revealed these hidden truths (some of these revealed truths to the Church are: Gentiles and Jews being one people by faith in Christ Jesus, the physical body of the Christian becoming the temple of the Holy Spirit, the last Trumpet or the snatching away of the Church, and Christ in us) to the Apostles through prayers, visions, and spiritual revelations for the New Testament Church.

I accept this truth by faith because, according to God's perspective, Christians relate to God as "complete" in Christ Jesus (Colossians 2:10). The Old Testament saints were waiting for Messiah and the fulfillment of the Law. In the Old Testament, which means Old Covenant, the nation of Israel had to look forward to the Cross of Calvary in faith. In other words, the Old Covenant given to Moses at Mount Sinai stated that God would, for a time, accept the blood (life) of a designated, first born animal as a propitiation (sin covering) for the people of Israel. All the articles of the Tabernacle, including the Tabernacle's design would teach, by its symbolism, the coming of Messiah and His death on a cross. When Jesus came into the world, the ones who received Jesus as their Messiah by faith got what they believed for—spiritual deliverance. However, there were many of the so called "higher class" of Israel who stumbled over Jesus because He didn't fit their expectations. They, like all of Israel, had been taught about Messiah by Israel's annual festivals, the Temple worship, the Mosaic Law, and the prophets, but they were so blinded by their expectations that they missed God.

We, the New Testament or New Covenant people, look back to the Cross of Calvary and receive its work of Redemption by faith and are gloriously saved to the utter most. The life, death, burial, and Resurrection of Jesus make Redemption possible to anyone who will receive it by faith. In other words, I am born again because I believe with all my heart that the Cross of Calvary is a historical fact and that Jesus lived, died, and rose

from the dead for my justification (free of all guilt from sin). Yes, the Cross is a historical fact, and Jesus is alive and living inside me. I confess this often through prayer, conversation, praise, and testimony, but mostly—I live like I believe it, with the help and comfort of the Holy Spirit. Glory! Everything I have as a believer is in Jesus Christ. He, alone, is more than sufficient for me in this life and throughout eternity. When I need something, I go to Jesus. He supplies to the uttermost. I will never, ever say, “Lord, I have everything I need in you. But, dear Jesus, I need in addition to you—a couple hundred dollars for spending.” I never want to say in error, “Lord, I know that you are my joy, but I’m not very happy in you.” No! God supplies—has supplied already before I even ask Him. I AM COMPLETE IN HIM—PERIOD.

I accept the truth that the object of my existence is not food, water, nor even faith. The object of my faith, the point of my believing, the target of my aim, the end to the means, and the catch of my pursuit is Jesus Christ Himself.

I’m not trying to become a Bible scholar. I’m not trying to be religious. I have one desire. His name is Jesus. Let’s test this. Can you say, beyond a doubt and in all honesty, that you have everything you desire in your present relationship with Jesus? You aren’t currently unhappy and seeking the world’s entertainment for solace. You aren’t currently discouraged and impoverished, miserable, or distant, but you are satisfied in Him. If you answered that you are having the time-of-your-life in Jesus, then glory to God. However, if you seem incomplete in your relationship, then listen up. Because there is so much more to come in this life and beyond, the Bible says that we are “saved by hope” (Romans chapter eight). We are born again in Christ Jesus. We are justified in Christ by faith. We are being sanctified in Him by the power of the Holy Spirit daily as we yield ourselves to Him. These are “positional” truths, relevant to us now. However, one day we will lay down this body in death and receive the salvation pledge in total. So, knowing this truth, I press on toward the final goal, which is a glorified body—this is complete salvation in Christ.

I accept the scriptures that speak about “positional” truths by faith. Because I am still in this frail body, I am still subject to its physical limitations and weaknesses. Sometimes my “experience” in life is quite different from my “position” in Christ. This dilemma is experienced by many Christians. If we don’t know the difference between “positional” truths and

“experiential” truths, we may never grow in our relationship with Jesus as well as we should. Let me explain. In Christ I am positionally held secure in Him throughout eternity—eternal security. Although I am positionally secure in Him, my current experience of circumstances might find me depressed and thinking that Jesus is far from me. Instead of despairing, I begin to say what the Bible says about my position in Christ. As I meditate and claim these truths by faith, Jesus becomes magnified in my soul, and my experience begins to align with my position in Christ. Therefore, when I say that I lack nothing in Christ, I am speaking a positional truth. If my experience at that time says otherwise, well, I continue to believe the Bible over temporal experiences. And before long, my need turns around to the glory of God. At that time, I begin to praise God for His glory. He gets the glory. I get the joy! Praise the Lord!

Before I leave you, I want to list some of the positional truths for believers. These truths are found only in Christ. In other words, in Christ I am... Here again, the aim of my focus, in spite of my circumstance, is Jesus. As I live, move and have my being in Him, I am full even when my circumstances declare otherwise. As I think on Him daily, pray to Him without ceasing, I am never far from Him, but alive and satiated in Him. I sense that I need nothing because He is so much a part of my reality. As I draw near to Him, He draws near to me. He never, ever fails me. I feel like a millionaire in Him although my bank account says otherwise. When I’m conversing with Him in fellowship, the world could stop, but I’d still be spinning in excitement. Can you relate? Every believer should stop trying to work for God. Every believer should begin praising Him with a joyful noise, and God will work through the believer. This is basic stuff.

Keep the faith. Stay the course. And keep looking for Jesus to appear soon.

Pastor T



Something to spend...

Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.com)

As a young boy growing up in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma I looked forward every year with great anticipation, I might add, to the annual Rooster Day event. Rooster Day was a weekend event in May that provided a carnival and parade with wafting aromas of greasy burgers frying at every other food booth on Main Street.

Rooster Day still takes place here in May of every year. And although the carnival and parade is much larger than what I experienced as a boy, every child's desire to attend it is still the same. But for most, like me, in order to spend the day having fun, one must bring some money to spend. (I mowed a lot of lawns for \$2.00 a yard to get enough money to spend at Rooster Day.)

In order to have fun at Rooster Day, one must have something to spend. Do you realize that God wants us to enjoy life through spending it? That's right. God gave us life to spend and not to keep. Listen again to this verse. Mark 8:36 reads, "Whoever seeks to save his life shall lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and for the sake of the gospel shall save it" (William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible Series Revised Edition The Gospel of Mark*, Westminster Press, 1975, p. 203).

History is full of examples of men, who by throwing away their lives, gained life eternal. Late in the fourth century, there was in the East a monk called Telemachus. He had determined to leave the world and to live all alone in prayer and meditation and fasting, and so to save his soul. In his lonely life he sought nothing but contact with God. But somehow he felt there was something wrong. One day as he rose from his knees, it suddenly dawned upon him that his life was based, not on a self-less, but on a selfish love of God. It came to him that if he was to serve God he must serve men, which the desert was no place for a Christian to live, that the cities were full of sin and therefore full of need.

Telemachus found his way to the [Roman] arena. There were eighty-thousand people there. The chariot races were ending; and there was tenseness in the crowd as the gladiators prepared to fight. Into the arena they came with their greeting. 'Hail, Caesar! We who are about to die salute you!' The fight was on and Telemachus was appalled. Men for whom Christ had died were killing each other to amuse an allegedly Christian populace. He leapt the barrier. He was in between the gladiators, and for a moment they stopped. 'Let the games go on,' roared the crowd. They pushed the old man aside; he was still in his hermit's robes. Again he came between them. The crowd began to hurl stones at him; they urged

the gladiators to kill him and get him out of the way. The commander of the games gave an order; a gladiator's sword rose and flashed; and Telemachus lay dead.

Suddenly the crowd was silent. They were suddenly shocked that a holy man should have been killed in such a way. Suddenly there was a mass realization of what this killing really was. The games ended abruptly that day—and they never began again. Telemachus, by dying, had ended them. As Gibbon said of him, 'His death was more useful to mankind than his life.' By losing his life he had done more than ever he could have done by husbanding it out in lonely devotion in the desert (Ibid., pp. 204-205).

Keep the faith. Stay the course. Jesus gave us His life so that we might have life to give away.

Pastor T



Spiritual Warfare...

Pastor Terry Dashner (www.ffcba.com.)

Introduction:

On October 28, 1997, a 12-year-old girl by the name of Samantha Zayzay was shot in the head during a drive-by shooting while she slept at her 5228 North Kenosha home in Tulsa, OK. She died two days later. An article from the Tulsa World describes the incident that led to her death, "Police said the bullet may have been intended for Samantha's older brother—who no longer lived in the house—and may have been motivated by an argument about a drug deal."

Because I was a Tulsa police officer at the time, I can give you a few more details about the shooting. Samantha's brother was a local dope dealer who had made enemies and had moved from the house just two days before the shooting. In the early morning hours, a car load of armed gangsters released a volley of rounds from automatic assault weapons. The rounds went completely through the house exterior, through the interior, striking Samantha in the head as she slept. Other rounds struck the Mother who came to the funeral with her leg in a cast.

At Samantha's funeral, the Reverend William J. Johnson gave the eulogy and said these words, "When drugs cause someone to take a life, it is time for a change." The question I asked then and continue to mull over when I recall this incident is this. I agree it's time for a change, *but what do we change?*

Do we change the social-economic environment that fosters gangs and drugs? Do we change the social injustices of society? Do we change the laws of community? What do we change to stop such madness?

Ray Stedman in his book entitled, *Spiritual Warfare*, writes the following regarding the fallacy of social reforms. Stedman says, "All our efforts to correct the evils we see in life are simply rearrangements of the difficulties. We succeed only in stirring them around a bit until they take a different form. But our methods can never solve the central problem of evil because they cannot come to grips with the power of Satan. As C.S. Lewis so aptly put it, 'No clever argument of bad eggs will make a good omelet.' When the full cycle of problems is run through, it begins again, and we say, 'History repeats itself.'"

What do we change?

If reform is not the answer then what, if anything, is? There is an answer. The answer is as old as mankind itself. Changing the outward environment of man will do very little. This has failed time and time again. The one thing that needs change is the heart of man. And the only thing that can change the heart of man is Jesus Christ. These two sentences are the most import statements in this entire document.

This morning I'm going to speak on the heart of man. In Jeremiah 17:9 it reads, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" Since the heart of man can not be cured of its evils, then it must be transplanted. The only way to change the nature of man is to build in him a new nature. II Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things are passed away and behold all things are become new." There are three simple things I want to say regarding the heart of man. For *one*, everyone born in to this world has a heart problem. *Secondly*, there is only one man who can give us a new heart, and His name is Jesus. And *thirdly*, spiritual exercise to maintain the new heart is imperative.

Body:

- I. Regarding the heart of man, everyone born in to this world by flesh and blood has a problem heart. Romans 5:12 reads, "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death

came to all men, because all sinned” (NIV) You see, Adam was the seminal head for all mankind. That means that we who come after Adam, come from him physically. In other words, you and I were in Adam as seeds when he transgressed God’s command to abstain from eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As a result, you and I sinned with him.

You might say, “Hey, that’s not fair.” Well, some people say it doesn’t seem fair that children are born into dysfunctional families. It might not be *fair* in some minds, but the fact remains. No one can choose his or her parents or physical attributes. The fact that you and I are born into sin happens without a choice; however, there is an *option* which speaks of the *fairness* or *perfect justice* of God. The fact that Jesus Christ became the last Adam, He can impute His righteousness to us who are of the first Adam. God’s *perfect justice* demands that *fairness* be offered. And “fairness” is this. There is a way out of our sin through Jesus Christ. (Read Romans 5: 17-19)

- II. Regarding the heart of man, only the God man, Jesus Christ, can give us a new heart. In I John 3:8 it says, “...The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.” The devil’s work is and has always been this—to steal, kill, and destroy God’s creation (John 10:10). When Jesus spoke these words as He died on the Cross—“It is finished”—He affirmed that Satan’s rule was broken over the first Adam and his seeds. That does not mean that anyone born in to the world now is automatically free of original sin. It does mean that God has provided an option for us who are in Adam. We can choose to stay in sin against God’s will, or receive by faith God’s imputed righteousness through His Son Jesus.

The Bible declares in Romans 10:9-10, “That if you will confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.”

- III. Regarding the heart of man, conversion is just the beginning to a new life in Christ. As a matter of fact, once you are born again you must grow up spiritually or you will remain hindered by sin and the old sin nature. In Galatians 5: 16 it reads, “So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”

What does it mean to “live by the Spirit?” It means this. Once you are born again, you no longer belong to yourself. You can no longer live for yourself only. And if you do, you will be miserable. I know because I have tried it. Once you receive your salvation in Christ you are His forever (ICor.3:16). In order to surrender your will to His, you must ask the Holy Spirit to rule from the throne of your heart daily. You must seek out the

leadership of the Holy Spirit in your life. You do this by starting every day with a prayer of consecration—Lord, I am yours today. Holy Spirit fill me and use me for your glory. You do this by feasting on God’s Word. Direction for a Spirit filled life can only come by the Word of God. When you are walking daily with the Holy Spirit, you will be aware of Satan’s tactics against you. You will be aware of temptations to the flesh. And because you have the Spirit of God working in you, He will give you the power to overcome the traps of the enemy.

Conclusion:

These three things pertain to the heart condition of man. Every man is born physically into sin. His heart is the heart of the first Adam. It pumps the blood of sin. The remedy for this tainted heart is a new heart. The old heart can not be patched up to work better. The old heart must be removed by the hand of God and replaced with the heart of the last Adam, Jesus Christ. Once we receive the new heart by faith in Jesus’ redemptive work of Calvary, we must exercise the new heart so that it will become strong and vibrant. This is done by the help of the Spirit of God and His Holy Word.

The disciple’s life in Christ is one of forgiveness, justification through the blood of Jesus, and sanctification through the help of the Holy Spirit. If you’ve never had a heart transplant, may I encourage you to ask God for a new heart today? If you will believe God’s promise of life and receive it by asking for it, God will save you. Once you are born again, don’t revert back to the old life. Reach forward in Christ by His power. Grow up in God. Fight the good fight of faith. Stay the course. Life will reward you graciously.

Pastor T.



