

Our purpose is to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,” and to “prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

OLD PATHS ADVOCATE

“To continue speaking the truth in love,” “endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace,” “keeping the ordinance as delivered.”

“Thus saith the Lord, ‘stand ye in the ways, and see and ask for the Old Paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest of your souls.’ (Jer. 6:16) “And they that be of Thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Paths to Dwell in.” (Isa. 58:12).

VOL. XCI

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NO. 3

THE MYSTERY REVEALED, ROMANS 11:25

By JERRY L. CUTTER

“For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in” (NKJV).

A guide for understanding this verse: “For I do not desire, brethren (Gentiles in particular: 11:13), that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part [or “in respects to a part,” Thayer, p. 401] has happened to Israel until the fullness [that which is or has been filled...“full number” (Thayer, p. 513) of the Gentiles has come in.” That is, when the full number of the Gentiles has “come into” or come “to enter” “into the kingdom of God” (Thayer, p. 187).

Beginning with Romans 11:13, Paul is writing to Gentile Christians in Rome. His desire in writing was (1) to stop the Gentile brethren from speculating as to why the Jews (Israelites) were spiritually blind and (2) to keep them from forming an opinion as to how long the blindness would last.

Speculating on spiritual matters, or any other serious matter, is dangerous. It is not unusual, even today, for brethren to do this; that is, to form opinions on things they know little or nothing about. This subject must be defined in order to be understood. Paul answers the mystery in one sentence. The blindness will last “until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.” That is, until Gentiles themselves no longer enter the church.

Being inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul did not leave it up to the brethren and their imaginations to determine how long Israel’s spiritual blindness would last. Paul received the truth, wrote the truth, and now

it is up to all brethren to read and believe the truth (Ephesians 3:1-5).

A Gentile is any human being, man or woman. The Jews, in order to distinguish themselves from all other humans, were Israelites, named after Jacob, their spiritual father.

The mystery is built around when the “blindness in part,” (or as respects a part - Thayer, p. 401) in Israel will cease. The blindness will continue until “the fullness” (full number) (Thayer, p. 513) of the Gentiles “has come in” - but “come in” to what?

“Come in” (eis-erchomai) is defined as a “2. Metaph. Used, a. of entrance into any condition, state of things, society, employment ... used absol. Of those who come into (i. e. become members of) the Christian church, Ro. xi. 25” (Thayer, p. 188). Obviously, a few Jews had continued becoming members of the assemblies in and around Rome, but not many (Chapter 16).

The end of time is connected to both Jews and Gentiles and their coming into the church. The partial spiritual blindness of the Jews coming into the church continues even today. By the time the fullness or “full number” of the Gentiles has come into the church, few, if any, Jews will be coming into the church.

The “fullness” (pleroma), or the full number of the Gentiles coming into the church, refers to “that which is filled, -full number, Ro. 11:25” (Thayer, p. 518). And right now, generally speaking, few Gentiles are interested in Christ and of coming into His church. Jesus said that “... narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matthew 7:13-14; Luke 13:23-30).

Thus, time will continue until the “fullness,” or full number, of the Gentiles has come into the church of Christ. Jesus died for his church (Matthew 16:18), and

continued on page 6

CONTENTS

Vol. XCI No. 3



ADVOCATE

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| The Mystery Revealed | 1 |
| Editorial | 2 |
| Querist Column | 3 |
| God's Weapon of Choice..... | 4 |
| My Ways Are Not Your Ways..... | 4 |
| The Two Covenants..... | 7 |
| Are Christians Under Law Today?..... | 8 |
| Letters From God | 9 |
| Our Departed..... | 10 |
| Field Reports | 10 |
| WALKS THROUGH THE BIBLE..... | 12 |

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Editorial

ABORTION IN THE NEWS AGAIN

By DON L. KING

Abortion is not new to any of us. For years we have heard about it on the news and felt saddened that anyone would allow it to take place. It has been sinful from the very beginning, but those who endorse it now seem to be even more bold. The issue is also political now, and some in obvious ignorance of God's will, are seemingly anxious to endorse it. It is all a very sad state of affairs.

Infanticide is actually very old and was forbidden by God. As far back as Deuteronomy 18, to name one passage, it was forbidden and proclaimed an abomination. Those who practiced it were to be put to death. Several nations have sacrificed children to fire, and the horrific evidence has been found and identified by archaeologists in later times.

While nearly all people in modern times are horrified at the thought of the ancient practice, some are seemingly unfazed by modern methods of abortion. The actual killing of unborn children is front page news at this time. As unbelievable as it might seem, in "some cases" a child may even be born alive and then a decision might be made by the doctors and parents as to whether he, or she, is to be allowed to live or die. The report is that the infant will be kept "comfortable" until the decision is made. This is the sad news of the day on television, radio, and newspapers, and some politicians have been represented as being favorable to it.

Abortion, as horrific as it is, remains staunchly contended for by some today as a woman's right. The argument that women have the right to make decisions about their own bodies should be seen as fallacious immediately. The child, once conceived, is not the woman's body anymore. Yes, it is within her body but the "fetus" has its own DNA which determines everything about the new human being as it develops within the womb. This is a child, a little girl or boy, who has as much right to live, and be loved, as any of us. If we allow the argument that the mother may make decisions about her own body, and that is her choice, what about the body of a completely different person within her womb? May she also decide whether that person lives or dies? The truth is that her only real choice is whether she decides to conceive in the first place!

continued on page 7

QUERIST COLUMN

By CLINT DEFRANCE

Question: What is the proper form of congregational organization and government in the absence of elders?

Answer: The above question is certainly one of the most important questions facing the modern Church. American congregations have an inexcusable epidemic of disorder. Many congregations 50 or 100 years old have never had elders and seem no closer to having them now than the day they began to assemble. The apostle Paul teaches by command and example that elders must be in every congregation: "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you..." (Titus 1:5). And, "so when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed" (Acts 14:23). From these scriptures, and more, we must conclude that the only form(s) of congregational organization and government in absence of elders is something that is reasonably certain to lead to an eldership as soon as possible.

In Titus 1:10-16, immediately after charging Titus not to sacrifice the high standards of qualification God has established for who may hold the office of a bishop, Paul states the depravity of Cretan culture (the society in which Titus lived and labored). The Christians needed to be protected from this wicked culture, but they were also coming out of it, and therefore finding men who were suddenly and naturally qualified as elders would be highly improbable. In Titus 2, Paul gives a simple plan for ordering the congregation into a spiritual family from which qualified men will soon be produced who can serve as elders. In the plan given to Titus, the "older" are to teach the "younger." That is, the congregation must be structured in a way that gives deference to spiritual wisdom and maturity. The congregation must learn to submit to those who are their seniors in the faith for the sake of their work in God's service - only then will they be prepared to submit to the eldership and allow them to "rule" in joy rather than grief as God commands (Hebrews 13:17).

In 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15, Paul gives orders to the church, without reference to any official distinctions (i.e. elders), about the relationship of respect and submission that must exist in every congregation. In

verse 12-23, Paul addresses those who are not leaders (those who are spiritually less mature): "And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves." Then, in verses 14-15, Paul addresses those who are leaders (those who are spiritually more mature, knowledgeable, and experienced): "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all."

In this plan, communication is key, and there are responsibilities on every member of the congregation. Those who are not leaders must learn to be peaceful (to get along and to be cooperative), and submissive (to recognize that there are others in the congregation who know more than they know and who deserve respect for their lives of faithfulness to Christ). Those who are leaders must learn that leadership in the congregation is much more than decision making - it is ministering to the needs of the brethren, manifesting the fruit of the Spirit, and ensuring that conflicts and issues be resolved according to wisdom and truth.

Identifying the spiritually mature from the spiritually less mature can be a difficult task, and may require the assistance of an evangelist. This was evidently the work of Titus in Crete. However, no alternative arrangement to the eldership is acceptable. The church without elders is "deficient" and "lacking" - the church that embraces that condition indefinitely for some other way has turned against the commandment of Jesus Christ.

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GOD'S WEAPON OF CHOICE

By AARON BATTEY

There was an avalanche of giants charging head on. Their strides were so quick and furious that the very earth shook under their feet. They were wielding swords with double edges and a license to kill. In front of these giants quaked a pitiful formation of soldiers, what compared to be grasshoppers in the face of wild beasts. In one fell swoop the first approaching giant lowered his blade to the dismemberment of four separate limbs from the counteroffensive. Even amidst the horrific cries, one could not avoid hearing the cracking of bone and the spilling of marrow that accompanied the blow. Only a handful would escape the onslaught and finger their way back to Joshua and Caleb. This was God's judgment on Israel at Kadesh Barnea.

Twelve spies had just returned from surveying Canaan and entered the Israelite camp two days prior to the event above (Numbers 13). Ten of the spies gave a dim report, "The (inhabitants of the) land devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. We were like grasshoppers in our own sight!" (Numbers 13:32-33). Joshua and Caleb trusted in God's undefeated right hand to deliver the land of giants to Israel, but they were the minority report. After a tongue lashing from Joshua and Caleb, a terrifying display of God's glory to Moses threatening to annihilate the entire nation (Numbers 14:11-12), and a plague that did in fact extinguish the 10 Debbie downing spies, the Israelite people got the point. They cried and confessed, cried and confessed (Numbers 14:39). Unfortunately, they presumed that their sins had no hangover consequences, and so they attempted to make restitution for their lack of faith by setting out to conquer those grasshopper devouring giants. The rest is history.

The Kadesh Barnea tragedy is the very subject of consideration upon arriving at Hebrews 3 & 4. The writer spends the entirety of Hebrews 3:7-19 looking back at that sad example, emphasizing the Israelites' lack of trust and obedience (v. 18-19), otherwise known as saving faith. The blood curdling screams of slaughtered Israelites can still be heard at the end of chapter 4. Failure by Israel to enter God's promised rest and exactly what that rest typified defines chapter 4:1-10. With screams in earshot, the writer then tells his Christian audience, "Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience," (Hebrews 4:11). What kind of fall

is he talking about? The fall of hundreds of Israelite bodies, the blood of which oozed from under the blades and boots of the ferocious Amalekites at Kadesh Barnea. This meticulous image is very well in the writer's mind upon penning the following soul saving exhortation to his Christian friends- "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow.,," (Hebrews 4:12). You thought the scene at Kadesh Barnea was gory? Child's play. We are reminded of John's vision of Christ in judgment, "He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called the Word of God. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp two-edged sword, that with it He should strike the nations," (Revelation 19:13,15). Kadesh Barnea was fearful enough, so how much more fearful should it be when the people of God hear the Word of God today?

The Hebrew Christians, like the Galatian Christians in Galatians 1:6, were going through a moment of crisis. Many had quit assembling (Heb. 10:25). Others had flooding doubts about their initial confession of faith in Christ. The writer gives a quadruple exhortation in chapters 3 & 4 to hold on to that confession (3:1,3;6,3;14,4:14), because it was slipping, slipping fast. As an antidote to this spiritual plague sweeping the church, the preacher of Hebrews effectually presents Christ as the supremacy of human hope. There is no realistic alternative for a Christian who has tasted the blessings of Christ. But ultimately, every Christian -Hebrew, American, Russian, etc.- must remember that God's word is alive. His word is terribly powerful. His word separates bone from marrow, ending the lives of those who do not regard Him as faithful to His word and promises. His word is His weapon of choice. May Christians today be just as diligent to avoid falling according to the same example of those at Kadesh Barnea. —OPA

MY WAYS ARE NOT YOUR WAYS

By PAUL O. NICHOLS

From time to time we human beings need to be reminded of the fact that the ways of God and the ways of man are not the same. If they were, there would be no need for the Bible. We could direct our own way to Heaven. All a person of normal intelligence has to do is to consider the condition of the world today, and the chaotic mess that man has made of it. "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and

he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the min cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isa. 55:6-11).

Today there are thousands of religions of every stripe and brand that man can invent. And if a person has difficulty finding one that suits him, he can just start a new one of his own contrivance. And regardless of how bazaar or strange it may be, there are people who will fall for it and think it is all right

The Bible is the guide book given by God to direct us to Heaven and give us eternal life. It reveals the will of God to man because we do not have the ability to do it on our own. And God sent Jesus to "seek and to save" the lost, because we could not save ourselves (Luke 11: 10). "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer:10:23). And "The fool hath said, in his heart,"There is no God" (psa. 14:1). Many ignore the Bible and its teaching and still think that God will save them because they are "religious".

There are people who are sincere and conscientious in what they believe, and are willing to make all kinds of sacrifices of their time and money in the name of some man made religious organization, but are guilty of "vain worship". Jesus warned, "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9). And the Scriptures plainly state, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."(2 John 9-11). The Word of God warns, in no uncertain terms, that in the day of Judgment there are going to be religious people who are going to be lost, because they did not abide by the Scriptures, but did what seemed good to them; things the Lord did not authorize. Listen to the warning again: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the

doctrine of Christ, hath not God." We are forbidden in clear and unmistakable language, "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (Prov. 30:6). The apostle Paul was so concerned, that he wrote to the congregation of Galatia, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." (Gal. 1 :6-9).

Even in the Lord's own church there have been brethren who began to practice things not authorized by God, and by so doing have defied divine authority, and have encouraged others to do the same. For instance, before Jesus returned to Heaven, He introduced the communion service to the apostles; showed them by example how it was to be observed, and commanded,"This do in remembrance of me" (1 Cor. 11:24, 25). But in more recent times, many have been encouraged to violate the example set by Jesus and practiced by the apostles and the early church. Individual cups and individual breads for each communicant is the practice because of their fear of germs, more than their fear of the Lord. Many of the same ones adopted the denominational Sunday School system of teaching, while others have not gone that far, but are very much like the denominations in other aspects.

Very recently a number of these congregations which left the New Testament pattern of the Communion as authorized by Christ, have introduced instrumental music into the worship of the church, because worldly minded members like it. This is to maintain their numbers and increase their membership. Such worldly minded nonconformist members and preachers are not so concerned with what the Bible says, as much as they are about popularity and pleasing themselves and other worldly minded members. Jesus said, "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me."

We have proven what the Scripture stated it as a matter of fact, "God's ways are not your ways, and His thoughts are not your thoughts". "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:7).

God's Revealed Will

All things of the creation were brought into existence
by miracle.

Since then they continue by natural law.

The same principle is seen in God's revelation.
Until the Bible was completely revealed, the Word
dwelt in inspired men.

Now it is in the inspired book, the Bible.

Miracles were necessary in Creation,
Not in procreation.

Miracles were necessary in revelation,
Not in proclamation.

Today the Bible is preached by what is written,
Not in signs and wonders

The Bible

Blessed Bible, how I love it!
How it doth my bosom cheer.
What hath earth like this to covet?
Oh, what store of wealth are here!

THE MYSTERY...continued from page one

He will save His church (Ephesians 5:23). However, when the "full number" occurs is when no one is left who will obey the gospel of Christ and become a member of His church. It is then when time will cease.

Paul himself was an Israelite and knew well that only a few of his relatives were being saved at the time he wrote Romans. Paul wished that "by any means" he could do something to "save some of them...who are of his flesh" (11:14). And he also knew well that "at the present time (or at the time he wrote Romans) that there was only a remnant" (a few Jews) being saved (10:16-21 and 11:5).

NATIONAL ISRAEL'S spiritual blindness continues, and most Jews continue to be recalcitrant and disobedient (10:21; 11:10). However, "some" will continue to be saved (11:5; 11:14). "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, [only] the remnant shall be saved" (9:27; 11:5). What, then, about the Gentiles? "Their fullness" or full number indicates that the time will come when they also will cease coming into the "Christian church."

After "the fullness of the Gentiles has come in," that is, after the Gentiles have stopped coming into the "Christian church," the reason for Jesus' coming into the world in the beginning, will have been fulfilled (Matthew 1:21). But only the LORD GOD HIMSELF knows when that moment has come and when time does not need to continue. Let the Son of God give us the answer to this: Jesus said: "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Mark 13:32).

When the end of time nears, and when Satan knows that he has but a short time left, he, and those with him, "will go up on the breadth of the earth and surround the camp of the saints and the beloved city" (Revelation 20:9). However, God will not allow Satan to destroy "the camp of the saints." Fire will come down from God out of heaven and devour them (Revelation 20:10). A few Christians will remain until the end. And the reason the end has not already come is that the Lord "is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9; I Corinthians 10:12). Simply, and sadly, the Jews will never change, and neither, it seems, will the Gentiles.

Two things have been revealed: 1) Gentiles will continue to "come in," or into the "Christian church," that is, "until the fullness (full number) of the Gentiles has come in," or until Gentiles will no longer respond to the gospel call. However, 2) spiritual blindness, blindness in part (partial) ["meros, as respects a part, Ro. 11:25": Thayer, p. 401] will continue with the Jews until the end of time. Israel will "...bow down their back always" (Psalms 69:16-28; Romans 11:8-10). The Jews have, as with the Gentiles, always had an opportunity to be saved. Salvation is for "whosoever will."

Paul is not teaching us that at some future date some great event will happen, and that National Israel will be saved. The fact remains that no nation has ever been saved or will ever be saved. Every person in every nation has always been offered salvation. No 1000-year reign of Jesus on the earth, and from Jerusalem, is taught in the Bible. The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus will return for the final judgment only, and that will happen when most people least expect it (1 Corinthians 15:50-54; II Thessalonians 1:7-12). When the end comes, fire will come "down from God out of heaven and it will devour all those who do not know Him and who have refused to obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (II Thessalonians 1:8)."

Hopefully, a companion article will follow this one, based on Romans 11:26: “And so all Israel will be saved -just as it is written” (Romans 11:26).

ABORTION IN THE NEWS...continued from page two

The laws of the land, at least in many places, provide that if a person is convicted of murdering a woman carrying a child in her womb, the charge is double homicide (the killing of two persons.) However, some of those same lawmakers argue that life only begins at actual birth, (see the contradiction?) and apparently see no problem permitting the mother to end her unborn child’s life before birth, or even up to the time of actual birth! As some of the old debaters used to say: “The legs of the lame are not equal.”

God knew David long before his actual birth. In Psalms 139:13-16 it reads:”For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.

My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.”

A person who believes the Bible to be the Word of Almighty God could never accept that life only begins at actual birth. The Bible plainly says that the substance of David (David’s body, etc.), was not hidden from God WHEN he was made in secret (conceived). (Psalms 139:15) If this doesn’t show that life begins at conception what does it show? God knew him from the moment of conception! David said God possessed his reins. This has to mean that God knew David and what his desires and passions would be before his actual birth. David said God “covered” him in his mother’s womb. In other words, God fashioned him or put him together. Some believe this to be the meaning of the original text. David’s substance, or body, was not hidden from God and this was before his actual birth. Is it reasonable to assert that David was not really alive, or human, when God knew him? If not, what did God see while David was still in the womb? Only tissue? David said by inspiration that his substance, or body, was not hidden from God before his birth. David did speak by

inspiration because Peter wrote in 2 Peter 1:21, “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” So, believers must accept that God saw David and knew all about him BEFORE his actual birth. It is either that or deny the inspiration of the Word of God. Nothing is hidden from God. Paul wrote in Hebrews 4:13: “Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” God not only knew David before birth but all of us as well. Then, in Psalms 139:16 we read: “Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written.”

What is the book of which he speaks? Could it be the “book of life?” John spoke of it in Revelation 20:12 and promised that it would be opened at the great day of judgment. He said: “...and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.” Whatever the book is, it is plain to see that God recorded David within it before his physical birth. What does that inspired affirmation do to the argument that a woman has the right to do with her body as she pleases?

What if David’s mother had aborted him? She would have ended a life that had already been recorded by God in His book! What does this mean? The answer is plain and simple. Abortion is murder just as surely as the taking of life after birth is murder. Once conception occurs a new human and soul exists within the womb and is recorded by Almighty God in His book. Personally, I would not wish to stand before the lord in judgment and attempt to convince Him that what He saw, knew, and recorded didn’t really exist. Think on these things.
—DLK

THE TWO COVENANTS

By MELVIN BLALOCK

For the benefit of our weekly newspaper audience we have sought to make a clear distinction between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Many religious errors are practiced today, based on a failure to distinguish between the two. In the previous articles we have shown that we are no longer subject to the laws of the Old Testament because the Old Testament was replaced by The New Testament. We cited the following scriptures which show that this is true; Heb.

8:6-13; Heb. 9:16-20; Gal 4:21-31. Since it is true that we no longer live by the Old Testament, the logical question is, "Of what value is the Old Testament to the Christian?" It should be stated unequivocally that the Old Testament is of immense value to the Christian. The reading of the Old Testament is very important to our understanding of the New Testament. The Apostle Paul expressed it well in his epistle to the Romans: "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope," Rom. 15:4. The writings of the Old Covenant point forward to the great blessing to be enjoyed by those who have become a party to the New Covenant. The Old Testament is a revealing of the New. Jesus often pointed to the writings of the Old Testament. We only have space to cite a few examples. Jesus said, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me," John 5:39. The scriptures that Jesus referred to are those of the Old Testament. Jesus said to the unbelieving Jews, "Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you - Moses, in whom you trust. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?" John 5:45-47. Moses was the great law giver of the Old Testament. Following His resurrection Jesus said to His disciples, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself," Lk. 24:25-27. The Apostle Paul went into the Jewish Synagogue and "for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, 'This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.'" Acts 17:2-3. The scriptures that he resorted to were those of the Old Testament. The Old Testament is of immense value to the Christian. Though the New Testament Christian is no longer subject to the terms of the Old Covenant, we should be thankful for the inspirational words of that Covenant pointing us to the Christ.

ARE CHRISTIANS UNDER LAW TODAY?

By AARON BATTEY

People do not like rules, except their own. This mindset is the reason for the ongoing debate over, "What is

truth?" If truth is relative to each individual, then there are no rules. Thankfully, governments operate under rules, good or bad. God's government operates under rules as well. In the days of Judges, "There was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes," (21:25). This succinct summary of a dark age in Israel's history stands in stark contrast to the next phase of history narrated in Samuel. In Samuel, for the first time ever, a physical king reigns over the kingdom of Israel. There were laws in the kingdom, and there were harsh penalties for breaking those laws (i.e. 2 Samuel 12). A kingdom without law is an anarchy. Judges describes anarchy. The Kingdom of God is not an anarchy; consequently, Christians have law they must obey.

That last statement is not something you hear every day. Most denominations proclaim that Christians are not under law today, just grace. In fact, that's what Paul said in Romans 6:14, "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace." But, did Paul mean what most denominations today mean? The short answer is, "No."

Unfortunately, most denominations are inbred with what is known as Calvinism. Calvinism is a doctrine that purports many things, among which is the very popular anthem, "You are saved by the grace of God without any works whatsoever." The combination of Romans 6:14 and Ephesians 2:8-9 make for a formidable one-two Calvinistic punch. Most people innocently fall prey to this deception, because most people have never read their Bible, studied the book of Romans, and prefer to live with no moral code. Paul was absolutely spot on in Romans 6:15 and Ephesians 2:8-9. Just the same, James was spot on in James 2:14-26, and so was Paul in Romans 3:31.

What is the purpose of law then? Law in its most generic and simple sense is a regulation. The Law of Moses (Romans 2:17) was a corpus of over 600 regulations for the kingdom of Israel. The moral law (Romans 2:14-15) was a corpus of regulations for those who were outside the kingdom of Israel. Both of these systems of regulations were given for good reason. 1 Timothy 1:8-11 says that the Law of Moses was good, and it was given to regulate ungodly people. Galatians 3:23 says the Law of Moses guarded man from sin, and pointed him to Christ (v. 24). In the first three chapters of Romans, Paul is explaining that all men of every age, whether Gentiles who had the moral law, or Jews who had the Law of Moses, all of them are guilty of the law they lived under. These former systems of law

accomplished what they were made to accomplish—make man realize that he has no hope of being saved apart Jesus Christ. The moral law and the Law of Moses were perfect, and each time someone broke the law, that person then realized they had no hope unless a perfect redeemer were to come and pay their ransom (synonym for “redeemer”).

Consider an allegory. There was a person named Man. Man got caught driving 100 mph in a 50 mph zone. Man got thrown in jail. The next day he appeared before his judge named Law. Law was a just judge. He was just, because he gave people exactly what they deserved, allowing for no grace whatsoever. Man was condemned to death for disobeying Law. Man was very penitent, crying that he would do anything to save his life. All the sudden, someone came to the front of the court room. It was Ransom. Ransom said He would die in the place of penitent Man. Law didn’t care who died as long as justice was met. Ransom died on behalf of Man, and Man went free. Man still had to obey Law, but he now realized that he could not be saved without Ransom.

Christians do have law they have to obey today. In contrast to the Law of Moses, the Christian law is called by many different names in the New Testament— the law of God (Rom. 7:25), the law of the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2), the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2), and the perfect law of liberty (James 2:25). This law is found beginning in Matthew 5-7, and extends throughout the rest of the New Testament scriptures. The law of Christ is perfect, making the Christian aware of what God calls good and reminding him when he breaks the law that there is no hope without Ransom (Jesus Christ). Ransom from sin is conditional for the alien sinner (Acts 2:38) and the Christian (2 Cor. 7:8-10). Christians are “not under law” (Rom. 6:14) in this sense: they are not depending on the law to save them. God’s grace is ultimately what saves, but without obedience to the law of Christ and a humble attitude (Luke 17:7-10), one cannot attain that grace. Do not be mistaken, the Kingdom of God is not an anarchy, and Christians must obey the law of Christ to be ransomed by Christ.

LETTERS FROM GOD

BY AARON BOONE

Letters make up a large portion of the New Testament. 21 of the 27 books of the New Testament are in fact letters. Upon the delivery of these letters there was an urge to read them and share them with the surrounding

congregations (Colossians 4:16). Within these letters were words of doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16-17), the very words man should live by. Seven letters that often pique the interest of readers are the seven letters in the book of Revelation.

The seven Churches of Asia, in the book of Revelation, find themselves with letters postmarked Heaven. While each letter is unique in that each Church needed different instructions, within all seven God repeats two important phrases, “I know your works” (Revelation 2:2, 2:9, 2:13, 2:19, 3:1, 3:8, 3:15), as well as “He who has an ear let him hear” (Revelation 2:7, 2:11, 2:17, 2:29, 3:6, 3:13, 3:22). If God desired for the Churches of Asia, no matter what unique circumstance they found themselves in, to read these two remarks we must realize the importance of them for us as well.

First, God’s acknowledgement of knowing our works is a source of encouragement to those who with humility are going about their Christian works. It comes with the understanding that the “Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly” (Matthew 6:1-4). People often forget the importance of works in our Christian life. James wrote of our faith working with our works to make us complete and that “man is justified by works and not by faith only” (James 2:22-24). The death of Christ was so that He could “purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14) and yet we may be disqualified if our works are “abominable and disobedient” (Titus 1:16).

God follows up His statement of knowledge by commanding us to hear his words. It is God’s word that judges us. (John 12:48) Thus to live by any other standard than the Bible’s teaching is to miss the mark. We as Christians are “called,” that requires hearing, out of darkness and into His light (1 Peter 2:9). We are commanded to be “Transformed” (Romans 12:1-2), how? Not by letting God’s word enter one ear and go out the other, but by looking into the scriptures and obeying them (2 Corinthians 3: 18). The God who has given us eyes to see and ears to hear (Proverbs 20: 12) is the same God who expects us to use them to have faith which comes by hearing (Romans 10:17) and to search the scriptures as we “work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12).

Throughout all of this we learn important truths that must be applied to our lives. We learn that God cares

about our works and our obedience to His word. Even the two Churches who needed no correction, Smyrna and Philadelphia, God still commanded them to pay close attention to His words, because He knew their works. In a similar manner Paul speaks of his continual need to grow in that he had not already “attained perfection; but I press on...” (Philippians 3:12).



Our Departed

SMITH - Layten Eugene Smith, C.A. and Iva Jo Smith's grandson, born in Odessa, TX. to Randall and Tammy Smith May 26, 1995. He was baptized at Westway Church of Christ by Brother Kevin Fox in Midland TX., who also preached his funeral, consisting of kind words of comfort, joy, and expectancy. Layten was loved by all who knew him, and loved life and being with his Family. Layten was preceded in death by his grandparent's Bill and Patricia McMillion, Iva Jo Smith, uncle Dyke Culp, and cousin Katlyn Culp and Survived by his sister Carlee Smith, brother Colten Smith, loving parents Randall and Tammy Smith, Grandfather C. A. Smith, and numerous aunts, uncles and cousins. When Randall and Tammy chose his resting place they asked if there was a place near to his granny, Iva Jo and there was, right by her side, therefore, when the Lord comes they will rise together face to face and I can almost hear her say, Oh! Layten! it's the Lord, coming to take us home and his death will not be in vain. I pray that we all will keep the faith and cling to the precious promises of God and ours will not be in vain either. Praise the Lord for His love, mercy, grace and providence...Oh glorious thought! Oh Lord come quick! —C.A. Smith

BISHOP - Kenneth Elray Bishop was born July 12, 1927, to Gilbert Ray and Flora Lee (Morgan)

Bishop, the sixth of eight children, at the family farm in Young County Texas. He passed from this life 91 years later (Jan. 7, 2019) in Lubbock, Texas. Kenneth married Dorothy Musgrave on February 3, 1945, and was very instrumental in beginning the church in Andrews, Texas, and in his longtime hometown of Olney, Texas. He was well-known and much-loved in Olney as a service station owner/operator and someone to whom no one seemed to be a stranger. Kenneth is survived by two daughters: Dodie and husband Mike Grinnell and Lynne and husband David Mizer; seven grandchildren; nineteen great-grandchildren; nine great-great-grandchildren and one sister, Jean Parker. Earl Haralson, Chuck Hall, and I were privileged to try to speak words of comfort to the huge group gathered to celebrate a life well-lived. —Leo D. Short

Field Reports

Don L. King, 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550, old_paths@juno.com, February 5, 2019. January 2 was the departure date for the 38th annual trip to the Philippines. It was a pleasure to be with Frank Brancato once again in this work. We have made a number of trips together and he has proved to be a true yoke-fellow. We traveled among the congregations on the Islands of Luzon and Palawan as time allowed taking turn about preaching daily. We found the work to be in generally good condition and at peace, which is a blessing indeed. It was our pleasure to have Edson Danao, Conrado Libertino, and Dario Estavillo, faithful preachers for a number of years, travel along with us assisting in translating and advice as well as preaching. 91 were baptized according to our count, for which we give God the glory. The Philippines suffered from storms (typhoons) in 2018 which damaged homes, buildings, and destroyed some crops, etc., but they are amazingly resilient and always rebuild. The work in the Philippines began in 1981 and has grown admirably in spite of various difficulties. Frank and I remained healthy and enjoyed being together with all the brethren in the work. There are some wonderful people in that land. I look forward to preaching in various places in 2019, and am thankful my health seems to be strengthening. Preachers, please take the few minutes required and send us monthly reports this year for the Old Paths Advocate. Brethren tell us they really enjoy

reading them. If your subscription needs to be renewed please do so immediately....and consider sending the paper to others who may benefit from knowing more about the brotherhood and preachers. Lord bless the brotherhood in 2019.

Carl M. Johnson, 1400 Northcrest Drive, Ada, OK 74820, cmjthebackpage@gmail.com, Feb. 14. We were shocked last Wednesday when Phyllis' cousin Donna Renfro, of Healdton, Oklahoma died of an apparent heart attack. She was 66 years old. She had just completed chemotherapy for breast cancer and was to have some radiation next. She was anxious to get the radiation done and put her battle with cancer behind her. We saw her and her entire family recently and she was in good spirits, looked really good, and seemed to be doing so well. She was more like a little sister to Phyllis than a cousin. They grew up together and Donna went to college here in Ada and was at our house almost every day. She married Bill Renfro and they have two grown children. Her son Scott remains close friends with my two sons. All of them are faithful members of the church—which is a wonderful source of consolation. I preached both services at home last Lord's Day, and I am scheduled to preach at Healdton this coming Lord's Day, and at Moore the next. We continue to look forward to the 43rd Annual March Meeting here at home (March 1-3). Jimmy Cating will be conducting the meeting. My book "For Such A Time As This" has been on sale for almost four months now and I continue to receive orders every week. The good news is that I still have a limited supply of the books left, but the bad news is that the postal rates increased in January. The cost is \$20 plus \$3.27 postage for one book. Postage for two books is \$4.83. May God bless us all as we strive to glorify His name.

Frank Brancato, 12718 Larkin Drive, Bakersfield, CA 93312, February 14, 2019 email: frankbrancato@sbcglobal.net. On January 22, Brother Don King and I returned from the Philippines. We had another productive trip with 91 baptisms, and a very productive preacher's study in Roxas. We hope and pray that all of the preachers were edified and encouraged. As always, I enjoyed working with Don. He did a fantastic job, and I am so thankful that he is healthy once again. On February 1st, I had the pleasure of holding the young peoples meeting in OKC with Cullen Smith. Cullen is one of my dearest friends, and I appreciate him so much for all that he does for the cause of Christ. We enjoyed

holding the meeting very much, and we especially enjoyed spending time with all who were in attendance. The crowds were outstanding, and we pray that we were able to accomplish some lasting good. I want to take this opportunity to thank Allen and Suzanne Bailey for making us feel so comfortable in their home, and for taking such good care of us while we were there. The work here in Bakersfield continues to move forward in a positive direction. This week 17 more prospects started the Bible Correspondence course. We also have another 40 leads from the TV program, and we pray for results from them soon. We still have private bible studies each week with personal contacts, and we continue to pray for God's increase. Also, Lord willing, my upcoming meeting schedule will be as follows: 21st Street OKC (April 7-14), and Ada OK (May 5-12). May God bless His faithful everywhere!

Paul O Nichols, 14217 Rosehill, Overland Park, KS 66221. Here in the Kansas City Area we are snowed in. From day to day it is hard to carry on a normal existence when the temperature continually changes so drastically. We have had some unusually warm days, only to have the temperature drop below zero a little while later, and I am sure there are other places which experienced the same. Having grown up in warmer climates (El Paso, TX, and Hollywood, CA) it has been drastically different for me to adjust. Otherwise this is a wonderful place to live. We have loving fellow Christians who are sincere and teachable. Members who want to do what is right, with no compromise with error. Members that are loving and have consciences that are sensitive, which move them to change if necessary to be in harmony with God's will. It is wonderful to be a part of the Stony Point congregation where people are considerate of the needs of one another, and who are willing to furnish resources to help fill the needs of fellow Christians in other countries. During the past year we have had many confessions of fault and a number of baptisms, and to the Lord goes the glory. We have young men who lead singing, dismiss the services with prayer, and who have taught lessons from the pulpit. We have young ladies who are an encouragement to them. Right now I am suffering broken ribs and bruises as a result of a recent fall, but I am healing. It is good to hear of the meetings which our brethren are holding in various places, and the good that is being accomplished. May the Lord be with us in this new year as we continue to do His will and work to save a few more precious souls before it is too late.

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WALKS THROUGH THE BIBLE. . .

LET THE LOWER LIGHTS BE BURNING

By JERRY DICKINSON

“That you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain nor labored in vain. Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. For this reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.” (Philippians 2:15-18) Those amazing and beautiful words from Paul to the beloved brethren in the church at Philippi express the heart of the great Apostle for these brethren he converted as recorded in Acts 16. This small church was at times the only church that supported Paul in his evangelistic work. They loved Paul, and Paul loved them. He reminds them that they lived in a crooked and perverse culture, however they were lights in the darkness as they shined forth the word of life in their preaching and in their living. A key word in the Philippian letter is the word “rejoice” and Paul rejoiced that he was at that time in prison in Rome, being poured out as an offering as a testimony of the fact that he had brought them to their faith and service in Christ. “I am glad to suffer as a testimony to your service,” he says in essence. I want you to be glad and rejoice with me.”

Let us remind ourselves that Paul is in prison awaiting trial and possible execution as he writes about rejoicing and being glad. Amazing! He was not glad to be in prison, but he was glad in prison! There is a difference. He did not enjoy and rejoice in the bondage and suffering he endured for Christ, but he rejoiced and was glad that his suffering was for the Lord, and it advanced the cause. “But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which have happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel.” What joy to know that your suffering results in the gospel being spread and souls being saved. Paul was a light in the dark prison house in Rome. He reminds the Philippians that they too are lights. Let us be reminded, brethren, that today we are lights in this still crooked, perverse, and dark world we live in. There are, all around us, people lost in the darkness, looking for light and a way out of the malaise of our totally depraved culture. Jesus declared us to be the light of the world. Are we shining brightly or have the lights gone out?

Philip Paul Bliss was born in 1838 and died in 1876. He was a prolific song writer. Some of his hymns we still sing today are, Wonderful Words of Life, and Almost Persuaded. He wrote the music for the classic hymn, It Is Well. In 1871, he was in Chicago and heard a sermon by the notable preacher Dwight Moody. In the sermon Moody referenced a shipwreck that had recently occurred in Cleveland harbor. It was a dark and foggy night as the ship approached the perilous harbor and the Captain could see the light from the lighthouse high above the harbor, but the lower lights along the shore were not illuminated. These lower lights helped guide the ship to harbor and helped avoid running aground.

Turning to the Helmsman, the Captain asked, “I see the light from the lighthouse but where are the lower lights?” “They have all gone out sir,” was the Helmsman’s reply. “Can we make it safely into the harbor?” asked the worried Captain. Replied the even more worried Helmsman, “We must make it or perish!” The ship did not make it. Many lives were lost that night because the lower lights were out. Dwight Moody used this tragedy to illustrate his point. “God is the great Lighthouse,” he declared, “And His light is ever beaming, but we are the lower lights along the shore. Let us be sure the lower lights are beaming!” Being a poet, P. P. Bliss used that illustration to compose the great hymn we still sing today.

Brightly beams our Father’s mercy from the lighthouse evermore;
But to us He gives the keeping of the lights along the shore.
Dark the night of sin has settled, loud the angry billows roar;
Eager eyes are watching, longing, for the lights along the shore.
Trim your feeble lamps my brother; some poor seaman tempest tossed;
Trying now to make the harbor, in the darkness may be lost.
Let the lower lights be burning! Send a gleam across the wave!
Some poor fainting, struggling seaman, you may rescue, you may save.

Paul told the Philippians that he wanted to rejoice in “the day of Christ.” When Jesus comes to claim His own, Paul is saying, I want to see you among that redeemed number. That will happen if you keep shining for the Lord he assures them. I want to see you, dear reader, in that throng of redeemed ones at the coming of Jesus. I want to be there too! Let us keep shining and beaming for Jesus till he comes.....!