

GRACE & TRUTH **MAGAZINE**

- ***Walking As A Disciple***
- ***Willing To Die Six Times***
- ***The Rapture***

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ARE YOU A SELL OUT?

A sellout is someone who totally abandoned – even betrayed – his beliefs, principles and possibly relationships to join or satisfy others associated with a different view. Examples of such individuals are pretty easy to find in the worlds of entertainment, politics and business – usually because they value fame and riches more than almost anything else. So one might wonder, “What does a sellout (related to our February topic) have to do with being a disciple of Christ?”

Think about where we began in life. We had a desire to satisfy ourselves, didn’t we? Even a baby will cry until it gets what will make it “happy.” Moving into childhood and then adulthood we found ourselves having the attitudes and ideas typical of the world in which we live. We were followers – which is the definition of “disciple” – of the world. In this the Bible is quite sharp: “A friend of the world makes himself an *enemy* of God” (Jas. 4:4 NASB); “If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is *not* in him” (1 Jn. 2:15); and “The whole world lies in the power of *the evil one*” (1 Jn. 5:19).

As this is what we were physically born into, we need to become sellouts ourselves – completely abandoning worldliness for that which is infinitely better. We need to be devoted disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ! The path begins by being born again, spiritually entering into life everlasting. Jesus told Nicodemus, “You *must* be born again” (Jn. 3:7). Through Paul, God continues, “I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to *present* your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God ... Do not be conformed to this world, but *be transformed* by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom. 12:1-2) and “*deny* ungodliness and worldly desires” (Ti. 2:12). Contrary to the fame and riches found in this world, as followers of Christ we have “the Spirit who is from God, so that we may *know* the things freely given to us by God” (1 Cor. 2:12).

So, this begs the question: “Are you sold out to Christ – a disciple following Him and Him alone?”

Paul



Low In The Grave He Lay

Low in the grave He lay, Jesus my Savior,
Waiting the coming day, Jesus my Lord!

Refrain

Up from the grave He arose,
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes,
He arose a Victor from the dark domain,
And He lives forever, with His saints to reign.
He arose! He arose!
Hallelujah! Christ arose!

Vainly they watch His bed, Jesus my Savior;
Vainly they seal the dead, Jesus my Lord!

Death cannot keep its Prey, Jesus my Savior;
He tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord!

—Robert Lowry (1826-1899)



Right Motives Define True Disciples – **WRONG MOTIVES DO NOT**

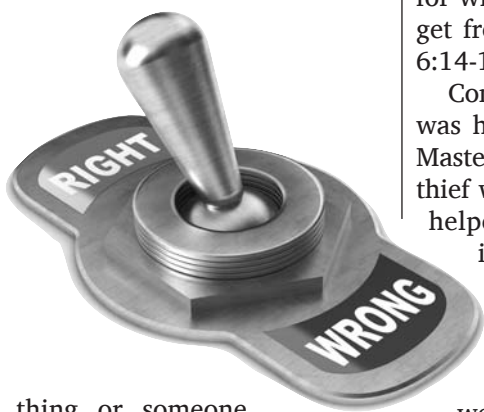
by Hank Blok

Honestly ask yourself this question, “Am I a real disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ?” There are a number of motives for being His disciple, and the signs of a sincere devotee will be very different from the individuals with ambitions that lead ultimately to a disappointed soul. Are you enjoying walking with the Lord now, or are you simply facing disappointment?

Right Motives

Some important qualities will be seen in a true follower having correct incentives:

1. There will be an attraction to Him as the One who first loved us (1 Jn. 4:19).
2. There will be a continuance in His fellowship, driven by the fact that the Lord Jesus Himself is precious to us individually (1 Pet. 2:7).
3. There will be a following of His teachings and commandments because of our love for Him (Jn. 14:15) and because we have believed that He is the Way, the Truth and the Life (Jn. 14:6).
4. There will be, when tempted to forsake Him and follow some-



thing or someone else, a realization that we have an anchor: “To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life” (see John 6:66-68 KJV).

These are the characteristics of a genuine disciple, a loving follower of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Wrong Motives

There are many wrong motives for acting the “Christian” way. A person may be following Jesus Christ¹ for what they think they can get: a special family (the family of God), a “prestigious” job (such as a position within the local church), improved health or gaining wealth. These improper motives, even evident in the days of the Lord, have formed false disciples throughout Church history. Many who followed Jesus Christ wanted to make Him king – not because of His preciousness, but

for what they thought they could get from Him (see John 2:23-25, 6:14-15).

Consider Judas Iscariot. What was his motive for following the Master? Was it money? He was a thief who held the moneybag and helped himself to what was inside (Jn. 12:6). Or was it power and popularity that he sought? Judas, after all, was numbered among the Lord’s twelve disciples who were sent forth to preach, heal

sicknesses and cast out demons (Mk. 3:14-15). Whatever his motives, we can certainly say that Judas was not a true disciple of our Lord Jesus Christ. The One who knows the heart made a condemning statement about this imposter: “But there are some of you that believe not.” Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not and who it was that would betray Him (Jn. 6:64).

One of the Twelve and others in the early church professed that they knew God, but in their works they denied Him – “being abominable [detestable], and disobedient, and unto every good work, reprobate [worthless]” (Ti. 1:16). Is it any different today? Of course not! There are “Christians” who think they are disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ but their obvious intentions suggest otherwise.

Consider those who follow the

“prosperity gospel” – a “believe it/receive it” theology. Such a message must be feared as this so-called gospel is really only a means to an end: to gain the blessings of health and material goods. This teaching prevents the person from making Him Lord and from being the object of one’s affections as He becomes simply the *means* of, or way to, prosperity. Being a disciple of this philosophy may have its perceived rewards today even as it did in the days of the Exodus, as noted in Psalm 106:14-15: Then the Israelites “lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert, and He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.” Anyone following the person and teaching of Christ for what he can “get out of it” is certainly not a true disciple; he is spiritually famished.

There are other ways someone may follow in the Christian pathway and not be a true disciple of the Lord Jesus. Here are a few possible motives out of many:

- It is done to please parents, friends or associates.
- It has become a habit.
- It provides a social network and sense of belonging.
- It offers some prestige.

A Serious Consideration

Whatever one’s purpose may be

in following Christ, if it is not out of a pure attraction to the person, work and teaching of the Lord Jesus, it is a false motivation. That man or woman, boy or girl is not a true disciple.

The Lord Jesus set out a number of requirements for a genuine and satisfying discipleship:

1. “If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple” (Lk. 14:26). To understand this statement the meaning of the Greek word translated “hate” must be examined. The original Greek word is *miseo*, meaning “to love less” (*Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*). Therefore, our Lord is saying that anyone following Him, making a commitment to the Christian way of life, must love Him *more than* family and friends, and even life itself. Natural ties should not hinder or affect absolute devotion to our Savior and Lord.
2. “And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple” (v.27). It may not be an easy matter in this world to follow the rejected Christ, but it is well worth it to have Him as our soul’s

delight. All other things, including hardship and material loss, can then be endured for His glory.

3. "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple" (v.33). The Lord Jesus deserves, and should have, the preeminent place in our hearts. Material wealth can be a great obstacle to an undivided motive (see Matthew 19:16-23).
4. "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn. 8:31-32). Continuance is the sign of a true disciple. Where this is not seen in one's life, that person's salvation may even be questioned – "Was it an actual conversion or simply an empty profession?" It must be noted, however, that a true Christian cannot lose their salvation (Jn. 10:28-30; Rom. 8:28-39).

But how can people tell if someone is a believer? The Bible says that they judge us by our fruit (Mt. 7:15-23). Where there is no fruit in a person's life, that individual must examine himself

or herself in humble confession, either toward restored discipleship or to salvation through repentance and receiving Christ Jesus as Lord.

A Heart Check

Let us take a moment to examine ourselves, checking our motives for being a disciple of the Lord Jesus. Do we have:

- A real attachment to the person of our Lord and Savior for who He is in Himself? This would be the number one reason for any and all of the following actions.
- A constant communion with Him in prayer, along with personal and group Bible study?
- A desire, willingness and courage to do His will?
- A seeking of direction from above, committing each day and action to Him? Much of the direction for happy Christian living will be found from our daily times of prayer and Bible study.
- A manner of life that brings glory to the Lord Jesus Christ? This will be an automatic result when occupied in doing the other items listed above through His power.

Oh, might we be genuine devotees indeed!

A Personal Experience

When I was a young child I came to the Savior for what I could get from Him. He was my “fire escape from hell!” At that time He became my Savior, but I did not become a conscientious disciple until some time later. Thankfully, through the years He has become precious to me. I now know that I love Him and seek to follow Him for who He is. May the Lord Jesus Himself and all He has done continually be my reason to love Him. My desire is that He would be the attraction of your heart as well – being a sincere disciple of the “altogether lovely” One (Song 5:16). He, Himself, will then be the motive to observe His teachings and follow in the whole doc-

trine of the Christ as recorded throughout the Scriptures.

A final encouragement for a disciple of the Lord Jesus comes directly from the Word of God. The Bible speaks to each of us individually when it says, “Delight thyself also in the LORD; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart” (Ps. 37:4). Don’t be surprised that when we truly delight in Him He will give us the gift of Himself, and He – the Lord Jesus Christ – *will* be that delight of our hearts. He is the greatest reward of genuine discipleship (Gen. 15:1)! **GT**

¹The title *Lord* Jesus Christ is not used here as a false disciple has not made Him “Lord” in their hearts.

From that time many of His disciples went back,
and walked no more with Him.
Then said Jesus unto the twelve,
Will ye also go away?
Then Simon Peter answered him,
Lord, to whom shall we go?
Thou hast the words of eternal life.
And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ,
the Son of the living God.

John 6:66-69 KJV

THE CHALLENGES OF Walking As A Disciple Of Our Lord Jesus Christ

by Colin Salter

Some years ago my wife and I hosted a discipleship class¹ using an acronym:

Discipleship
Involves
Submission to
Christ
In
Practical
Living
Everyday.

- Disciples are followers of someone or something.
- Famous people in our world have thousands of followers on social networking sites.
- Followers find out as much as they can about their heroes. They dress like them, listen to them and begin to think like them.

The Very First Followers Of Christ

Our Savior started His life's work by calling people to become His followers (Mt. 4:18-22, 9:9-13). These individuals left what they were doing and followed Him. What the disciples did can be seen by reading the Gospels of

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. We then can see that they fulfilled the dictionary (*Macmillian School Dictionary*) definition of a disciple:

1. They paid attention to what the Lord Jesus was doing.
2. They did what He commanded or advised them to do.

3. They went along in the same direction as He did.
4. They were interested in His progress.
5. They began to really understand what He was saying.
6. They did the same as He was doing.
7. They showed in their own lives the truth of His life.

R. C. Sproul defines Christian disciples as “those who are committed to follow Jesus as their Master” (*The Gospel Of God*). Commitment tells of a cost, as one serving his master.

Followers Have To Chose

Christian men and women who want to be genuine disciples have to make many decisions every day. They are constantly called to choose between their way of living and God’s way. We are faced with the choice: remain like the world or become more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

For all believers there is a wrong way and a right way to live. This is the spiritual struggle into which true Christians are born again. It begins in our minds – with our thoughts. These then influence our words and actions.

Let’s read Romans 12:1-2 (NIV, italics mine): “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bod-

ies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship. Do not *conform* to the pattern of this world, but *be transformed* by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Having given the theology of the gospel in Romans 1-11, Paul makes immediate application in how to live for Jesus Christ – with Him as *our* Lord. The Old Testament sacrificial system of the tabernacle and temple was replaced by the New Testament command (and yes, it is a command – it is *not* optional) to “put ourselves *alive* on the altar. To be a Christian means to live a life of sacrifice, a life of presentation, making a gift of ourselves to God.”² We do not sacrifice to make ourselves Christians, but because we are Christians we sacrifice ourselves.

Followers Change

Being a true disciple, this kind of sacrifice will affect every part of my life. My family life will be patterned on God’s Word whether as a loyal and loving husband, a spiritual and submissive wife, or an honoring and obedient child. My work life will reflect God’s values: not stealing time or materials, breaking business confidences or telling lies. My ethics

will be those the Lord Jesus Christ would have in my situation. I decide to care for my friends and neighbors, putting their welfare even above my own and meeting their needs as I am able. I ensure that my Christian service will mirror my Lord. I will sacrifice myself using my skills, health and time for the spreading of the gospel by word and deed. The way I use my money and other resources God has loaned me will honor Him and His ways – thus being totally different than the non-Christian people around me.

A new believer who wants to know God's will for his life will find it by prayerfully reading and studying the Word of God. This will help him to start thinking like God, and his new mind will develop new values. In everyday life these values will soon make him stand out from the crowd. By what he does he will be known to be a follower of Jesus Christ. When a man knows what God loves and hates it is quite easy for him to choose what to do – one's choices following the pattern of His thoughts which are now becoming his own!

Followers Cultivate

Figuratively, we who are Christian disciples live near the foot of the cross of our Lord Jesus. We learn to cross out the wrong and to cultivate the right in our lives.

Yes, we do make mistakes. But we learn from them and seek to avoid them in the future.

Using definitions from our dictionary we see that "cultivate," to prepare ground for growing crops, is an important word for Christian disciples. Through the Holy Spirit we prepare ourselves to produce spiritual fruit. Digging, weeding, feeding and protecting are all involved. A cultivated person is well educated and knows how to behave politely. We might say that a cultivated Christian lives a style of life that radiates the holiness, grace and love of Jesus Christ to everyone with whom he or she has contact. As in gardening or farming, preparation is the key to producing a good crop.

The Follower's Cost

Our Lord told His first disciples that following Him would not be easy. Through them He likewise warned us: "Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for Me will save it" (Lk. 9:23-24). Jesus Himself counted the cost and lived every day in God's honor. The cross on which He was executed was part of following His Father's will, and in Gethsemane He chose crucifixion rather than

release (Lk. 22:42-44). Giving honor and obedience were seen throughout His life – even as a child of 12 years (Lk. 2:49; Mt. 3:17, 17:5; Jn. 15:10). Notice that in Luke 9:23 the decision to follow Jesus had to be made at least once every 24 hours.

The Followers “L”

In many countries, people learning to drive have to have a red letter “L” attached to their motorbikes or cars. Here are seven “L’s” of the first disciples:

1. **Let go** of their old ways in life,
2. **Lived with** Jesus Christ, the traveling teacher,
3. **Learned from** Him as He explained Scripture (the Old Testament) to them,
4. **Listened to** Him,
5. **Looked at** Him,
6. **Looked more and more** like Him as time went by, and
7. **Loved God** with their heart, soul, mind and strength, and their neighbors likewise (Mk. 12:30-31).

Followers Speak Without Words

When Christians live as followers all day, every day, those around will take notice. Could it be that some do not follow Christ now because we do not follow Christ closely enough? True Christian discipleship speaks every language in the world and no one is beyond the reach of believers who live like the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:12, 2:1-2; 1 Jn. 2:6, 3:1-3). **GT**

¹These studies became my first book, *Raising The Standard*, at www.colinsalter.net

²Debbie Dodd, *Dictionary of Theological Terms In Simplified English* (Evangelism and Missions Information Service, Wheaton IL) 2003, p. 48.

Discipleship For Today

by Alfred Bouter

If we would add together the number of times “disciple” and “learn” (learn as a disciple) occur in the New Testament, we would find them almost 300 times – a vast topic, for sure. In the following pages we will look at some of the challenges and blessings of walking as a disciple of the Lord.

While giving instructions to the Twelve, the Lord Jesus said, “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master” (Mt. 10:24-25 NKJV). In this statement Christ emphasized the **relationship** between Him and His followers and showed the need of their **formation**, without which it would be impossible to send them out as His representatives. He compared it with the bond between a teacher and his students and a master and his servants. By the time He gave those instructions the Lord had called

several young men to be with Him and follow Him, so at a later time He might send them out as His representatives (Mk. 3:14).

Even though the disciples the Lord had called were different from each other and of various backgrounds, just as are all believers, they had certain things in common:

- All were **called** by Christ and had **responded** to His call;
- They **left all**¹ in order to be with Him and **follow** Him, and
- They **kept learning** from Him.

These things were necessary before the Lord could **send** them out on a specific mission which He gave them, as detailed in Matthew 10 (which we will see later). Similarly the Lord, who is now at God’s right hand in heaven, is training the believers to equip them for special tasks He has given. When sent out by the Lord they need to constantly rely on Him, being then able to represent the Master in a way that pleases Him.

Nathanael Meets Jesus – A Pattern For Disciples

Let's briefly look at the **relationship** with the Master, as illustrated in Nathanael (Jn. 1:45-50).

The disciple Philip told him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (v.45); and he invited Nathanael to "come and see" the Messiah. Despite his initial objections, Nathanael accepted the invitation. When he met the Lord Jesus, this One who knows the heart (Acts 1:24) said, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!" (Jn. 1:47). When meditating under the fig tree (v.48), Nathanael must have been occupied with the question of the Messiah and of his own condition. The Lord knew all this and had been working in him through the Holy Spirit.

Scripture links the fig tree with practical righteousness; and while meditating under this tree Nathanael had come to judge himself in God's light. Therefore, Jesus the Messiah could say to him those special words (v.47). As a true Israelite, Nathanael had learned lessons similar to his forefather Jacob, whose name God changed to Israel (Gen. 32:28). Now Nathanael recognized Jesus to be the Messiah, the Son of God

and the King of Israel (Jn. 1:49). He became His disciple and was further instructed by the Lord (vv.50-51). So we see that a disciple is a **learner**, taught by the Lord and who follows Him according to His instructions.

Calling, Formation, Obedience, Love

Christ's **calling** of disciples is seen with Peter and Andrew, John and James (Mk. 1:16-20), and Levi – who was called Matthew (Mt. 9:9). But in Nathanael we see "the other side of the coin": the inward preparation needed to respond to the call. The responses are different according to each one's character but they have some elements in common, namely **obedience to** and **love for** the Master. In a general way the Lord summarized the calling and the response with these words: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Mt. 11:28-29). Applying this for today, we say:

- We are attracted by Him,
- We come to Him,
- We follow Him,
- We learn from Him, and
- We obey and love Him.

At the same time He forms,

goes with, leads and protects us even in the midst of opposition and difficulties. The disciple is also a servant (literally bond-slave), and these two aspects cannot be separated.

Finally, the one who serves and follows the Master will be rewarded and honored, not only by the Master but also by the Father (Jn. 12:26). It is very special to the Father to have children in this world who are followers of His beloved Son – the One who was and still is rejected in and by this world.

the Lord was sent (9:13,35-36). The nation was occupied, not only by Rome, but by Beelzebub [prince of demons] as well (12:22-45). Today, the period of grace, God's message is to the Jews first (Rom. 1:16), but it also goes out to all people (Mt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:47).

2. The Twelve were to proclaim that the kingdom of heaven had drawn near (Mt. 10:7; compare 3:2, 4:17). This announcement implied the need for repentance



The Instructions For The Disciples' Mission – Many Object Lessons For Today

The twelve disciples sent out by the Lord after their initial formation received many specific instructions in view of their mission. Today, the immediate context is not the same, yet we can draw many lessons from these instructions by learning from the seven directives:²

1. The Twelve were sent only to the house of Israel, especially to the lost sheep among the nation (Mt. 10:5-6,38) – just as

(Mt. 4:17; Mk. 6:12) because of Israel's failure. But morally this message applies to all "for all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23). Initially John the Baptist, while introducing the King, emphasized the need of repentance. This complete U-turn, with inward sorrow for sin, was needed then as it is today; and it will also be needed after the rapture of the Church when the message of the coming Kingdom will again be proclaimed.

3. The Lord empowered His disci-

ples to perform signs to accompany their words. These acts of power were fourfold: to (1) heal sick ones; (2) cleanse lepers; (3) raise dead individuals; and (4) cast out demons. These miracles were signs of the age to come and of Messiah's reign in glory. Though postponed because of the King's rejection, these signs will be given again (Heb. 6:5). However, during the period of grace in which we live, even though sometimes physical healing occurs, there is a particular emphasis on the *moral* transformation (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Such transformed lives demonstrate the power of the King, even though He is absent from this scene.

4. The disciples had received their gifts freely and, therefore, they must give freely. They would wear a girdle for service (a belt, sometimes also used to carry money), but it was to be a service without commercialism or consumerism [business terms that relate to exploiting people for personal profit] – two things which happen when mixing God's Word with man's riches.
5. No special provisions need to be made. Trusting the Lord who provides (Lk. 22:35), the disciples must simply go out as they are, without taking extra

things. This is similar to Israel in the desert when the Lord was taking care of all their needs, whereas after arriving in the Promised Land they had to do everything themselves in faith with the Lord's help. So it is for disciples sent out today: rely on the Master and, on the other hand, make the necessary provisions (Lk. 22:36) in order to go out as His disciples, representing Him in a world that is opposed to Him. These two verses, Luke 22:35-36, present two sides of discipleship.

6. The instructions the Lord gave in Matthew 10:11-13 relate to a worthy reception of the messengers. A positive reception would bring peace (blessing) to the house.
7. The Lord foresaw a general rejection (10:13-15) and described its consequences. The greater the light, the more responsibility – where much was received (Israel and the Church), much will be demanded. Stephen, addressing the leaders who had rejected the message of grace, outlined the dire consequences of their hardening and rejection (Acts 7). These things are described for our learning on whom the ends of the age have come (1 Cor. 10:11-12).

The Disciples' Preparations In View Of Persecution

In view of opposition and persecution, the Lord prepared His disciples and us also by giving specific instructions for the special needs that would arise.

1. In the setting, disciples are as sheep among wolves – vulnerable but relying on the Master who is with them in dangerous situations. In such cases disciples need to be prudent (wise as serpents), and marked by purity, sincerity and innocence (as harmless doves).
2. “Beware!”, “Take heed!” and “Pay careful attention!” are appeals repeated five times in Matthew (6:1, 7:15, 10:17, 16:6,11). Persecution would come from religious as well as political or civil authorities, but help would be given by the Holy Spirit (10:17-20). Similarly, the apostle Paul warned of dangers coming from outside and inside the Church (Acts 20:28).
3. Persecution must be “for My name’s sake” and not because of our own failures. Such persecution will take place even inside the family circle (Mt. 10:21-22), often in the most aggressive and difficult forms. Yet, disciples need to “keep going” – enduring to the end. This means

Christians must continue even when facing dreadful opposition, now and until the rapture. In a prophetic sense, after the rapture endurance will be needed when disciples of that day will have to keep going on throughout severe persecution, until the coming of the King in judgment and glory. Notice also that there is a progression in the severity of the rejection: (1) opposition and dangers (10:16), (2) persecution (vv.17-20) and (3) delivering up to death by relatives (vv.21-22).

4. The work must go on despite opposition and persecution (v.23). The book of Acts and the Epistles give many examples of how the testimony continued.³ May we take courage!

The Lord’s Seven Words Of Encouragement For Disciples

1. The disciple is identified with the Master/Teacher, who is Lord (vv.24-25). He or she learns from Him, being formed and fed by Him while serving Him.
2. The message cannot be kept hidden. It must be spread despite resistance (vv.26-27).
3. They can kill the body but not the soul (v.28). There is a three-fold challenge and encouragement, “Do not fear” and “Don’t

be afraid” (vv.26,28,31).

4. The Father’s care is promised (v.29). This is similar to the promise that the Lord will be *with* the disciples (28:20), His presence with the sheep among wolves (10:16), the Holy Spirit *in* and *through* them (v.20) and the Father that is *for* them (vv.29-32).
5. The Lord Himself is the great Advocate with the Father in heaven (see 1 John 2:1), and on earth the Holy Spirit is in them (Mt. 10:20). Both help the disciples in their testimony (consider vv.31-32).
6. The Prince of Peace sends a sword (spiritually), subduing the enemy and giving victory (morally, not necessarily physically) to those who love Him above all else (vv.34-39). To “take up the cross” because of

7. The chain of command implies a chain of blessing (vv.40-42). Those who receive the disciple receive the Master, who is the Sender, and therefore the receiver(s) will be blessed.

Brief Summary Of Qualities And Functions Needed For Disciples

The disciples, called from various backgrounds to be sent out by the Lord while He is rejected, must have many qualities and abilities to function in different roles as outlined in Matthew 10. This applies to all believers since Christ calls them from various spheres of life to function as:

1. *Apostles* or sent ones⁴ (vv.1,5), or messengers – the Lord Himself also was sent (v.40);
2. *Workmen* or laborers (v.10) – workers God can approve (2 Tim. 2:15);



love for Him may imply that we have to go through this world expecting to be executed for His name’s sake. This would not be for selfish interests – whether for one’s self or group.

3. *Sheep*, reaching out to the lost sheep (v. 6) among wolves, in need of prudence (like serpents) and of purity (as doves) (v.16);
4. *Disciples*, learners and followers (v.24);

-
5. *Bondmen*, bond-servants or slaves (v.24);
 6. *Members* of Messiah's household (v.25), in contrast to those who belonged to the house of Israel, now occupied by the enemy (Beelzebul, lord of the dwelling (NASB), Mt. 12:43-45);
 7. *Prophets*, the Master's spokespersons (v. 41) anticipating His rule in glory;
 8. *Righteous ones* representing the righteous King (v.41) and walk-

ing in practical righteousness;

9. *Little ones* representing the One who humbled Himself (v.42) as the little Child (18:2-4).

In conclusion, we may be reminded of a verse from a hymn writer of old, Samuel Tomkins (1841-1926):

*We worship at Thy Holy feet,
And long to serve Thee still;
Take Thou our heart,
our lips, our lives,
And mould them to Thy will. GT*

¹This does not mean that they neglected their wives and families, but that they learned to give the Master His rightful place in their lives.

²For the moral qualifications needed for disciples, see Matthew 5:2-13.

³Understand the differences between (1) a literal meaning partly fulfilled then and partly afterwards in church history, (2) the prophetic or future fulfillment, before the Lord's return in glory; (3) the moral and spiritual application for the Church period; and (4) practical lessons, personally or collectively, today.

⁴Understand the distinction between *official* authority they had received, then, accompanied by God-given signs and wonders, and *moral* authority by being doers of the Word as applies to believers today.

A disciple is not above his teacher,
nor a servant above his master.

It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher,
and a servant like his master”

(Mt. 10:24-25 NKJV).

THE RAPTURE

by Martin Girard

“Are you looking forward to the rapture?”

Suppose an interviewer raised that question with a hundred truly born-again believers selected at random. It is likely that three different responses would emerge. There will be those who reply, “What rapture? I don’t know what you are talking about. I’ve never heard it mentioned in my church.” Others may say, “The rapture? Oh, you’re not one of those odd people who believe that, are you?” Then there will be those who respond, “Yes I’m looking forward to it, and many signs make me feel it can’t be very far off.”

WHAT IS MEANT WHEN PEOPLE speak of “the rapture” and why can it be such a contentious subject? In this article we are going to see what the expression means and attempt to discover why such differing responses may be heard when a question like the one above is raised.

First, it must be stated that the expression “the rapture” is not found in the Bible – though its meaning is certainly there. It is an expression that is closely connected with the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ. In 1 Thessalonians 4:17 Paul writes of those who are “alive and remain” being “caught up together with them [that is, the believing dead who have been raised] in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air” (KJV). Notice the expression “**caught up together**” which Paul uses in this verse. Without being too technical, the Greek word used by Paul was translated into Latin and then into the English language as “**rap-ture**.” It means the sudden snatching away of believers from an evil world to meet the Lord in the air.

A Promise Given

To any careful reader of the New Testament it will be obvious that before the Lord Jesus Christ left the earth He promised to return. In John 14:3 He spoke of going from His disciples to prepare a

place for them and of coming again to receive them unto Himself. No date was specified in the promise – simply that He would “come again” for them. The following words “that where I am, there ye may be also” make it clear that the Lord Jesus was not speaking of reappearing to the disciples after His resurrection. The promise is clearly connected with the “Father’s house” (v.2) and concerns bringing His disciples there.

Not long after making the promise, the Lord Jesus ascended to heaven before the wondering gaze of His disciples. As He disappeared from view an angel appeared with the message, “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). He would return! A clear promise remained in the minds of those first disciples.

From the beginning of the church age (Pentecost) the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ has been an important doctrine and a vital hope. The apostle Paul, having spent a short time in Thessalonica preaching the gospel and establishing a church there, made known to the new believers that their Savior would return “from heaven” (1 Th. 1:10). The closing words of the

Bible also confirm the promise made by the Lord that He will come again, to which His people respond, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20).

Why then does the question raised at the beginning of this article produce such different responses from born-again believers? It is not too difficult to draw a conclusion. In some churches the return of the Lord Jesus is rarely mentioned and certainly never taught in detail. Others know and believe that the Lord will come again but they have a different understanding of how it will all take place.

In Two Parts

One thing that many overlook is that there are two different aspects to the second coming of Christ. This was true of His first coming too. Prophecies in the Old Testament anticipated the Messiah’s “coming” to Bethlehem and also to Jerusalem. How could both be true? With hindsight we can understand perfectly that His birth was in Bethlehem and was very much a “private” affair witnessed by very few, while His entry into Jerusalem on a colt years later was a very “public” event before an enthusiastic crowd.

In His second coming something parallel can be traced. The

New Testament speaks of the return of Christ being unexpected (which is why the Lord taught the need to watch) and yet “every eye shall see Him” (Rev. 1:7) – without any mention of having to watch. How can such apparent contradictions be explained? Put simply, there will be two parts to the return of Christ. *First* He will come to the air, and *then* He will come to earth. His coming in the air will be “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Cor. 15:52) while His coming to earth will be in a display of power and great glory (Mt. 24:30). Clearly this cannot all take place at the same moment. The only way to harmonize these and many other Scriptures is to realize that the Lord will come in the air **for** His own and then will return from heaven **with** His own. Both things cannot take place at exactly the same moment.

The Rapture Scripture

The main passage of Scripture dealing with the rapture is 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. To comfort these recent converts who were distressed because of the death of believing loved-ones, Paul pointed them to the coming of the Lord: “The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of



God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (vv.16-17).

At the moment Christ comes, the church age will end. The events described here will take place in a split second, as we learn from 1 Corinthians 15:51-52. In this passage we are told that not all shall “sleep” (physically die), but all believers shall “be changed” instantaneously. It is important to notice that this was “a mystery” – something that had not been revealed before in Scripture (1 Cor. 15:51). We must therefore not expect to read about this in the Old Testament, although there were two men of God who fulfilled this in figure: Enoch and Elijah. These two men were both taken up into the Lord’s presence without experiencing death (Gen. 5:24; 2 Ki. 2:11).

This event, the rapture, could happen at any moment. Certain conditions do not need to be fulfilled first. The Lord Jesus made it clear that it is vital to be ready because we do not know when He will return (Mk. 13:35-37).

Why The Disagreement

Perhaps at this point we should ask why some Christians pour scorn upon the idea of the rapture. Do they not believe in the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ? Yes, they do believe; but they lump everything together. Some picture the Lord coming from heaven into the air, catching up His redeemed people and then returning at once with them to the earth. Of course, this *could* be concluded from Scripture, but it fails to bring one significant matter into consideration: *Israel*.

God has not finished with that nation. Although He is not dealing directly with them at this particular time, many Old Testament prophecies await fulfillment. In Daniel 9:24-27 we read of a very specific period of seventy “sevens” relating to Israel. The last of those “sevens” has not yet been fulfilled – an extremely significant seven-year period time that is mentioned elsewhere in Scripture. Piecing it all together we can see that a time of terrible suffering awaits that nation, but it

will be curtailed by the return of their Messiah whom they shall see (Zech. 12:9-10) when “His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives” (Zech. 14:4). There is no good reason to “spiritualize” such verses and deprive them of their literal meaning.

The church age is a period of time when God is calling from this world a heavenly people described as “the bride of Christ.” Failing to distinguish between this heavenly people and the earthly people of Israel leads to confusion. When the Church is complete and all who are going to make up the number of the redeemed have been gathered in, the Lord Jesus will come to receive His people whom He will take to their heavenly home. Believers will then stand before the judgment seat of Christ, that their lives of service may be evaluated before sharing the joy of the marriage supper of the Lamb (2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 19:6-9).

Many today simply fail to discern these differences because their theological training has taught them to think in a certain way. The views of Augustine of Hippo prevail in many institutions of learning and consequently a literal interpretation of prophecy is rejected. Knowing only too well that people with strange ideas exist, these theologians reject

whatever appears to contradict with Augustine, making the assumption that he interpreted every aspect of Scripture correctly. This accounts for the scorn that is often poured upon those who teach “the rapture” and distinguish between the Lord’s coming in the air and His coming to earth. Believers who sit under the teaching of men trained in theological college therefore usually hear nothing about the rapture.

A Practical Truth

Christ is coming again! His people are heaven-bound. The Lord Jesus may return at any time, and we must be ready. Events in the Middle East and in Europe point to the imminent fulfillment of prophecies; however that is another vast subject beyond the scope of this article. A discussion of the rapture should not become a heated debate, but neither should it be simply an academic exercise. Although “rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15) is vital, the knowledge that Christ is coming at any moment should make us want to live holy lives. By doing so we will not be ashamed when He shall appear (1 Jn. 3:2-3). **GT**

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All That Is For God Results From Death

by Grant Steidl

“Except the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, it abides alone; but if it die, it bears much fruit.”

—John 12:24 KJV

At first glance these words of our Lord seem to be a strange answer to give to people who simply wanted to see Him. What did He mean by them? As He continued speaking an amazing message began to emerge – one that has rung down the ages with an unchanging tone. It is this: All that is for God results from death.

The Lord Himself was that grain of wheat who fell into the ground and died so He might not abide alone. His finished work at Calvary’s cross has already produced an abundant eternal harvest. Even now He is bringing many sons to glory who will be eternally conformed to His image – just as the grains of wheat on a stalk resemble the seed that died to produce them.

But more, these grains of wheat which result from the death of Christ must likewise fall into the ground and die if they are to bear fruit for God.

Having learned that Christ died for them, they must further learn that they have died with Him – and are risen with Him to walk in newness of life. Then they will begin to experience what it means to keep their lives by hating them (v.25). Perhaps a little story will help.

Many years ago a party of British sailors landed on a frozen northerly island and accidentally set it on fire. Its stunted scrub brush quickly went up in flames. It seemed a shame that the island should lose what little vegetation it had. But that isn’t the end of the story. Years later the island was found to be covered with beautiful silver birches. Their seeds had sprouted through the warmth of the fire. The death of the old made possible the growth and display of the new.

So when we allow our scrubby natural life to go up in smoke, fruit springing out of death shall be seen in our lives. What a worthwhile exchange! **GT**



The purpose of this column is to help you study the Bible on your own. Look up the Bible references and think about them before writing your answers. Do not send this study to us, as this is not a correspondence course.

DISCOVER WHAT THE PREACHER HAS TO SAY IN ECCLESIASTES

CHAPTER 11 – By Alan Groth



“Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these God will bring you into judgment.”

—Ecclesiastes 11:9 NKJV

As this book comes to a close, the Preacher takes up a few more exhortations for life’s pathway. Remembering that life will end and activities will cease, we are to act diligently in all that we do. For the young, he sets before them the Judge. They are to walk in the light of God’s watchful eye.

Read Ecclesiastes 11

1. In verses 1-8, there are several present activities that have a future outcome. What are the activities and what can be expected?

v.1 _____

v.2 _____

v.4 _____

v.6 _____

vv.7-8 _____

2. What do we learn in these verses about how we should work? _____

3. What do you think the Preacher is saying in verse 3? _____

4. In verse 5 he concludes with “you do not know the works of God who makes everything.” Why? _____

5. Compare verses 1-8 with the following passages: 2 Corinthians 8:14, 2 Timothy 4:2, Job 10:21-22 and Revelation 22:5.

6. How many things does the Preacher instruct the young man to do (vv.9-10)? _____

7. Why do you think he ends verse 9 with “God will bring you into judgment” for all these? _____

8. “All that is coming is _____.”

9. “For childhood and youth are _____.”

Next month we'll *Discover* more of what the Preacher has to say in our study of Ecclesiastes.

Divine Titles

AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

Part Six

by A. J. Pollock

Divine Titles In The New Testament

When we come to the New Testament we breathe an atmosphere different from that of the Old Testament. Then it was a time of shadows, when the wonderful prophecies of the coming Christ were heard. Now we have the light of God fully revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ. We know of His actual entrance into this world, of His wondrous testimony to and revelation of God, of His wonderful life, of His atoning death and resurrection and glorification. How glorious that He who came into this world has brought the light of the love of God to sinful man – “love” which a writer describes as “infinite in measure, everlasting in duration, omnipotent in power, unchanging in character, all pervading in its presence, and passing knowledge.”

God

Unlike the Old Testament where there are several names of God in His essential Being, the New Testament has only one name, the translation of the Greek word *Theos*. The various names of God in the New Testament designate relative position, such as the Father in relation to the Son. God is:

- a Spirit (Jn. 4:24),
- the living God (1 Tim. 3:15),
- the true God (1 Th. 1:9),
- able (2 Cor. 9:8),

- faithful (1 Cor. 1:9),
- the God of hope, peace, all comfort, patience and consolation (Rom. 15:13; Heb. 13:20; 2 Cor. 1:3; Rom. 15:5; 2 Th. 2:16), and
- love (1 Jn. 4:16).

“To God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever” (Jude 25).

This name of God (*Theos*) occurs over 1,200 times in the New Testament. Eight times it is

employed to designate the gods of the heathen world or distinguished people. For example, John 10:34 speaks of “gods,” quoting from Psalm 82:6-7 where God is seen among the mighty, but telling them they would die like men, for they were but men. Otherwise, God (*Theos*) is invariably translated God.

God is presented in two ways: (1) acting in grace, “the acceptable year of the LORD” (Isa. 61:2) or (2) acting in government, “the day of vengeance of our God” (Isa. 61:2). Note the acceptable year of the Lord, the long stretched-out days of gracious waiting on man for his blessing, is compared with “the day of vengeance of our God,” the short hours in which judgment will be rendered to every man. “The acceptable year of the LORD” has already lasted 2,000 years and still God lingers in grace over a godless world. But the day of judgment must come, and signs are telling us that day is not far off. “The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and great in mercy” (Ps. 145:8).

Father

This is a most unspeakable name of God. In a most unique way it stands in relation to the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. This is a rela-

tionship He shares with none. There ever was the Father and the Son, the “only begotten” [Greek: *monogenes*] Son of God (Jn. 3:16). One has said, “Life – the Father from all eternity gives it; the Son from all eternity receives it.” And, there ever was the Holy Spirit. The three share their Godhead glory with none other.

But how wonderful that believers on the Lord Jesus Christ are children of God and can call Him Father. What joy must have filled the heart of the blessed Lord when risen and triumphant He sent the message by Mary Magdalene to His disciples saying, “Go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God’” (Jn. 20:17).

What a glorious message! We believers are seen in a relationship with God as Father in association with our blessed Lord. Divine life has been communicated to us, made possible by the atoning work of our Lord on the cross. We read: “In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him” (1 Jn. 4:9).

We have been made partakers of the divine nature, but not as being lifted to the level of deity for that could never be. We are

not omnipotent, omniscient or omnipresent [all-powerful, all-knowing or everywhere present]. Yet we share the moral qualities of the divine life, such as love, purity, compassion, holiness and righteousness; all while we possess a nature that can commune with God.

Note from John 20:17 that our Lord, in sending this marvelous message to His brethren is careful to indicate, by the very phrasing of the message, His preeminence which we all gladly recognize. He did not say “our Father,” but He carefully distinguished between “My” and “your.” He is not ashamed to call us brethren, but remembering who He is and what He has done for our eternal bless-

ing it would be quite out of place to call Him “our elder Brother.” Let us keep to the phrasing of Scripture and exercise that deep reverence that becomes us, while rejoicing in the wondrous relationship we are called to enjoy. How wondrous that God sent His Holy Spirit into our hearts that we might with the confidence of children cry, “*Abba* Father” (Gal. 4:6). [*Abba* is a word in Aramaic for father used by infants and might be reverently translated “Daddy.”]

We read: “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:16-17). **GT**

Related thoughts shared by Walter Scott (adapted from The Bible Handbook)

Father

The divine revelation to the Patriarchs was as “God Almighty,” to Israel as “Jehovah,” while to Christians it is “Father”– the distinguishing New Testament title. The name occurs by itself or in conjunction with other titles about 300 times in the New Testament Scriptures. It is worthy of

notice that Jesus only once directly addressed “God” as such (Mt. 27:46); He often spoke of God, but with that one exception, He always directly addressed the “Father.” Of the many divine names and titles there is none more full of comfort or more touching to the heart than that of “Father.” To the Christian it is the expres-

sion of that peculiar relationship and measure of blessed nearness, which every believer occupies, founded on accomplished redemption. A Jew, however godly, could not directly address Jehovah as his "Father." "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear Him" (Ps. 103:13)

"Father" is the *language* of the babe in Christ (1 Jn. 2:13), the *cry* of the Spirit in the believer (Rom. 8:15) and a *name* which speaks of a love and relationship only known and enjoyed by the practically [how he behaves] separated saint (1 Jn. 2:15-16). In those loved chapters of John 13-17, containing the dying instructions of Christ and in which His mind is given us for comfort and profit during the whole period of this present interval of grace, the name "Father" with its pronouns occurs upwards of 100 times.

The prayer of *glory* is addressed to the *God* of Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:17-23); while the prayer of *love* to the *Father* of Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:14-21). "Our Father" is not the language of Jesus *and* His disciples

as some have supposed, but of the latter only. "My Father" was solely spoken by Jesus. "My Father" and "Your Father" (Jn. 20:17), while maintaining the special blessedness of the believer, distinctly marks off the pre-eminent place of Jesus.

All disciplinary dealing (Heb. 12:9-10), conduct and life (1 Pet. 1:14-17), fellowship (1 Jn. 1) and restoration of soul (1 Jn. 2:1) are referred to the "Father." It is also the *Father's* care (Lk. 12:30), love (Jn. 16:27), grace (Mt. 5:45-48), goodness (Mt. 7:11), words (Jn. 17:8) and testimony (Jn. 17:14) that forms, stays and comforts the soul of the saint in his daily life.

But while "Father" is the name which, perhaps above all others, stirs the feelings and awakens the tenderest emotions of the heart, it must be kept in mind that the name was only fully declared after redemption had been accomplished, after the wrath of God had spent itself on Jesus on the cross. **GT**

Look for the continuation of this Series next month!

EZRA



by Leslie M. Grant

“For we were slaves. Yet our God did not forsake us in our bondage; but He extended mercy to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to revive us, to repair the house of our God, to rebuild its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem.” —Ezra 9:9 NKJV

Ezra, meaning “help,” is written by a scribe of this name and is an account of a restoring work of God in bringing back some of the Jews to Jerusalem. The first group came with Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:2) with the object [intention] of rebuilding the temple. This was at the commandment of Cyrus, king of Persia, for the Medes and Persians had by this time conquered the Babylonian Empire. Cyrus decreed that the vessels of the temple (previously carried away by Nebuchadnezzar) should be restored to the about-to-be rebuilt temple. There were hindrances in the building, but God, using the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, eventually

enabled the completion of this as Ezra 6:15 shows.

Another group of Jews returned later with Ezra during the reign of Artaxerxes. Ezra was a priest of the line of Aaron. He was sent to give help in the service of the rebuilt temple and to establish magistrates and judges who knew the law of God and were therefore able to rule in the land.

This is a necessary book for our own days when those who desire a return to the true worship of God according to Scripture can expect opposition. Their faith, however, will be rewarded if they are steadfast and stand firmly for the true principles of God. **GT**

This column is taken from the book “The Bible, Its 66 Books In Brief.” It is available for purchase from Believer’s Bookshelf USA (www.bbusa.org) and Believers Bookshelf Canada (www.bbcan.org).

Q&A

Where do people go when they die?

Some translations of the Bible seem to say that when Christ died He went to “hell.” Better translations use the word “hades,” which is simply the region of departed spirits.

But we then ask, “What about us when we die?”

What Happens At Death

Death occurs when the soul-spirit leaves the body: “The body without the spirit is dead” (Jas. 2:26 NIV). The body is subject to all the physical, chemical and biological changes common to ordinary matter. We say it “decays” or “burns up.” The Bible simply says, “dust you are and to dust you will return” (Gen. 3:19).

For centuries humans have wondered about the soul-spirit when asking about a dead person: “Where is he?” (Job 20:7). The body goes into the grave, but where does the soul-spirit go? That of the people of faith of the Old and New Testaments goes to one place while that of unbelievers goes to another, as we will shortly see.

Everybody will be resurrected

but not at the same time. There are those who “will rise to live” and there are those who will “rise to be condemned” (Jn. 5:28-29). The separation of the soul-spirit from the body is an unnatural state that came about as a result of Satan’s work. God will not allow that condition to continue indefinitely.

The Consequence Of Death For The Unbeliever

Where do the soul-spirits of unbelievers go at death? This question is answered by our Lord’s account of what happened to the rich man and to Lazarus. The rich man, apparently an unbeliever, died and went to “hades, where he was in torment” (Lk. 16:22-23). According to *Vine’s Dictionary Of Old And New Testament Words*, “hades” is simply “the region of departed spirits” and “hell” is the region of torment, also called *geena* or *gehenna*. *Gehenna* was also a place outside Jerusalem where there was always a fire and hence was a picture of the eternal fire of torment. The unbelievers, those in “hell,” are spiritually

dead and their names are not in the Book of Life. They will receive their sentence at the great white throne – being sentenced to an eternal existence of suffering in the “lake of fire” (Rev. 20:11-15). At the end of time, “death and hades” will be thrown into the lake of fire. There is the place in hades where the soul-spirit of the unbeliever suffers before he is resurrected “to be condemned,” followed then by the lake of fire where he will suffer after the resurrection and judgment.

The Consequence Of Death For The Believer

The crucified thief who repented of his sins (Lk. 23:40-43) died and went to “paradise,” the same place where the Lord went when He died! Paradise is a Persian word referring to a royal park, and then it was taken into the Greek to express the sum total of blessedness. In Revelation 2:7 it refers to heaven. Apparently paradise is the Bible word for the same place that the Jews called “Abraham’s side” (bosom, KJV) and which Paul speaks of as the place that believers go to when they are “away from the body and at home with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8)

Believers, both living and dead, will be raptured and given new bodies to live with the Lord

forever (1 Th. 4:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:52-54). The believer in the Lord Jesus Christ will never face judgment for any sin because all our sin and sins were paid for by Christ on the cross. Therefore the believer need not fear “God’s judgment seat” (Rom. 14:10) or the “judgment seat of Christ” (2 Cor. 5:10). What will be judged then is the “quality” of our works of service to determine our “reward” (1 Cor. 3:13-14).

Practical Application

In preaching the gospel one should emphasize that between hell and paradise “a great chasm has been fixed that cannot be crossed” (Lk. 16:26). It should also be emphasized that there will be no “second chance” – that our decision in this present life determines where we will spend eternity and what we do will determine what we will have there.

The truth is that the unbeliever will be in an eternal existence, first in a place of torment and then in the lake of fire. The believer on the other hand will go on to his or her reward. That no believer goes to eternal punishment is due to the grace of God and the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ. All people should therefore start believing now!

—Answered by Alan H. Crosby

Is it correct to pray this prayer which our pastors in Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa urge us to pray: “All demonic beings both physical and spiritual should die”? Also, can someone be a “demon destroyer” as some of our pastors claim to be?

Demons are fallen angels. They followed Lucifer, who is now called Satan (meaning “the adversary”), in his rebellion against God. The demons are spirit beings that have chosen to follow and serve Satan instead of continuing in the role for which God made them – “ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation” (Heb. 1:14 NKJV). Evidently, there are rankings among these mighty beings, for in Mark 9:29 after the disciples asked the Lord why they had not been able to cast out the demon that from childhood on had possessed a certain boy, He told them, “*This kind* can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.” Also, Ephesians 6:12 tells us that “we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Angelic beings cannot be destroyed. God has prepared hell for the devil and his angels (Mt. 25:41). Hell, also called “the lake of fire,” is where Satan and his demons will be tormented forever and ever (Rev. 20:10). It is a place of eternal separation from God and in this sense is “everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power” (2 Th. 1:9). It is not annihilation or a ceasing to exist. Furthermore, it is God, not man, who will inflict this punishment upon Satan and his host of demons as well as upon all who have sided with him in rebellion against God and His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. It is foolish assumption for any person, whether preacher or otherwise, to claim to be a “demon destroyer.”

Such people have little comprehension of the power and rank of Satan and his principalities and powers. In Daniel 10 we see that

demons have tremendous power and exercise evil influence on the affairs of the nations of this world. Jude tells us in verse 9 of his brief epistle that the archangel (chief angel) Michael did not dare to bring a reviling accusation against the devil, but simply said, "The Lord rebuke you." He would probably class such self-styled "demon destroyers" among those who he says in the next verse, "speak evil of whatever they do not know."

Nowhere in God's Word are believers told to seek out demons to destroy them. Our Lord Jesus encountered many demon-possessed persons and cast out the demons. He did not destroy them. In the case presented to us in Matthew 8:28-34, Mark 5:1-20 and Luke 8:26-39 we find the demons pleading to be allowed to enter a herd of pigs and the Lord's permitting of this. In their malevolence [evil, hostility] they made the pigs run violently down a steep place into the sea and drown. This caused the people of the area to beg the Lord to leave their region. The Lord gave His twelve disciples "power and authority over all demons" (Lk. 9:1), and the seventy He sent out in Luke 10:17-20 came back rejoicing that even the demons were subject to them in His name. The Acts records a number of instances of the early Christians

casting out unclean spirits and healing those who had been possessed by them. However, nowhere do we find God's people seeking out demon-possessed people to deal with the demons. Invariably we find that such people were brought to them or that they encountered such persons as they went about their activities for the Lord. In fact, in Acts 16:16-18 we find that Paul put up with the demon-possessed slave girl many days before commanding the demon to come out of her.

But casting out demons is not destroying them. Rather than being physical beings, demons are spirit beings and as such they do not die. It is thus pointless to pray that "all demonic beings both physical and spiritual should die." Instead, we are told to "submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (Jas. 4:7). Satan will attack, whether violently as a roaring lion (1 Pet. 5:8), or through temptation as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14-15). He had the audacity [arrogance] to attack the Lord Jesus in this latter way, seeking to seduce Him from His pathway of perfect obedience to the will of God.

The Lord still enables His own to cast out demons, but this can only be done in utter dependence upon Him. Boastful self-dependence is entirely out of place in

combat against such powerful foes. Thank God, however, they are defeated foes. Our Lord Jesus defeated Satan and all his power at Calvary. The hosts of evil can be overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of the testimony of those who love Him (Rev. 12:11). It is a mistake to seek out the hosts of evil to challenge them, but when we walk with the Lord we can count upon His help against all the onslaughts of the enemy. God's Word tells us: "I want you to be wise in what is good and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly" (Rom. 16:19-20). Occupation with our Lord Jesus and depend-

ence upon Him will give us present strength, and the future is sure. First John 4:4 assures us that the One indwelling us is greater than the one in the world. Ephesians 6:10-18 presents to us the whole armor of God. We are to put on this armor so that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

More could be said on this subject, but let it suffice to say it is much better to follow God's instructions and directions given us in the Holy Scriptures than to try to fight Satan's demons in our own strength or according to the erroneous teachings of men, whoever they may be or claim to be.

—Answered by Eugene P. Vedder, Jr.



The *Grace & Truth Magazine* is one of my most favorite and important learning tools of God's Word. I love the *Discovery* column, in the format of one actually opening your Bible, studying and researching the facts and answers. I keep every issue for further studies at later dates.

— *Mississippi, USA*

I have been immensely blessed since I started reading your magazine. The spiritual insight you bring out from the Word of God has been wonderful. Your *Series* "What Is A Shepherd" (Dec. '13 to Apr. '14) made me wiser.

— *Lagos, Nigeria*

[Editor's note: The "What Is A Shepherd" *Series* is now available from *Grace & Truth, Inc.* in booklet form!]

– continued from outside back cover

Not long after our conversation the little girl died. But just when she was to be buried I was quite seriously ill and it was impossible for me to attend her funeral.

Some time later a gentleman approached me and asked, “Do you know who I am?”

“I’m sorry, sir. I don’t know you.”

“I am the father of little Mary – the daddy she died for. I heard that she was willing to die six times over in order for me to hear the gospel even once. This has touched me very deeply and now I want to know the way of salvation.”

Soon after that the gentleman received the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Savior.

“The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith which we preach); that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salva-



tion. For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame’ ... For the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For ‘whoever calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.’” —Romans 10:8-13 NKJV

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” —Acts 16:31

How about you, dear reader? You see that it is as simple as the faith of a little child. Why not join that sweet little one and her repentant father, and receive the Savior and eternal life yourself? **GT**

This is available from us as a tract – but in Spanish only. Ask for Spanish tract #101.

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She Was Willing To Die Six Times



A well-known evangelist used to tell the following story:

Some time ago I went to visit a little seven-year-old girl, named Mary, who was quite ill. She wanted to see me urgently, so I went to her house. They took me to her room and I sat beside her bed.

“So, here I am. Tell me, little one, why did you want to see me?” I asked.

“I wanted to speak to you before I die.”

“But,” I asked in surprise, “What did you say? That you are going to die?”

“Yes, I am going to die.”

“You don’t want to be treated and recover your health?”

“No, sir,” young Mary affirmed.

“But ... why not?”

“Because since I have become a Christian,” the child answered with great calm, “many times I have tried to take my daddy to church, but he doesn’t want to go. I think that if I die, you would preach the gospel at my funeral. Isn’t that right?”

“Yes, little one.”

“Well, I think that if I die my daddy would have to go to the funeral. I would be willing to die six times over in order for him to hear the gospel.”

– *continued on inside back cover*

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