

# THE WORD OF TRUTH

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## *GOD'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE WORLD*

As a result of personal contact with many people, the correspondence that comes to life, the many articles I have read, a conviction has come to me that it is vitally essential that God's people give the most serious consideration to the relationship God bears to the world, to the men of this world and to His own people in the world. The attempts made by many to "look for the hand of God in everything" has resulted in vain imaginations upon the part of some. That God created the world is readily admitted by all who believe the Bible. Concerning this, the revelation is explicit and clear. But the relationship the Creator now bears to His creation is a matter that needs to be seriously considered. Many state their views of this matter as if God had not spoken. On no point are they more sure that they hold perfection of truth than concerning God's relationship to the world. Yet if they would trace their ideas back to their source, they would find that they did not get them from the Word of God. If truth concerning this is our desire, then we need to turn to His Word, discover what He has said, and then think accordingly. This is not a simple task, as it involves full consideration of the divine revelation concerning His works and ways with me.

As I think upon these things there comes to my mind the case of two sisters. One of these came to know Jesus Christ when just a girl. The other came to know him at about the age of forty, and for several years she found great joy in this relationship, until her husband, just forty-five years of age, died very suddenly. As a result she became quite bitter against God, charging Him with cruelty and lack of wisdom for "taking her husband, breaking up her home, and taking all joy from her life". She cannot understand why God would "take such a good man" and leave so many evil men to live to a ripe old age; why He would "break up a Christian home" while worldly and ungodly homes continue. She demands an explanation of these things from all who have sought to comfort her. Her sister has tried to console her by saying that an allwise God knows what is best and she must accept the "Lord's taking of her husband" as being an act of God in harmony with His wisdom and love.

In Acts 28, the people on the isle of Melita, after witnessing certain strange things that happened to Paul (he was shipwrecked first, then bitten by a poisonous serpent), interpreted them as signifying that he was a murderer; who, even though he had not drowned in the shipwreck, was being pursued by divine justice seeking to wreak vengeance upon him. But when he suffered no ill from the bite of the poisonous serpent, they changed their minds and decided he was a God. Both conclusions were entirely wrong. He was not a murderer, and he was not a god.

These incidents are sufficient to demonstrate the futility of attempting to interpret the meaning of the innumerable events that take place in the lives of all men. We have no right to "look for the hand of God in everything" for the Bible gives the most positive evidence that God has no hand in many things. As a rule, ordinary and commonplace events are ignored, but if an event is the least bit extraordinary, most people will examine it in the hope of finding some divine meaning or significance.

It is utterly childish, somewhat akin to the darkness and superstition of heathendom, to make every extraordinary happening to be a significant act of God. In fact, not even the unexplainable superhuman events that often occur in this world can be attributed to God. Some unexplainable events may be satanic, some may be demonic, and some may be simply extraordinary events having no significance whatsoever.

Many times, when I have looked at the starry sky on a clear night, I have wondered what it would be like if the stars were visible on just one night each hundred years - if they came into view unexpectedly and unannounced like the aurora borealis, giving men insufficient time to discover their pattern or chart their courses. What a sensation their appearance would cause! What fears and forebodings they would generate! What weird explanations would be made as to their meaning and significance! What strange messages men would claim to have read in them! Since the stars appear every cloudless night, men pay little attention to them. But if they appeared once each century, they would attempt to find some divine significance or message from God in their appearing. However, it is evident that a thing happening once a century can be of no more significance than the same thing occurring every night.

Man's crude attempts to explain or interpret the uncommon events that occur shows that he has little knowledge of the relationship which God bears to the world. Ideas concerning His relationship range between two extremes. At one extreme is a theory called **supralapsarianism** which holds that God is the author of and fully responsible for everything that occurs in this world, even evil, and all that happens is in harmony with His plans and purposes. At the other extreme is a theory called **deism**, which holds that God created the world, but has had no connection with it or its inhabitants since that time. The deists deny that God had revealed Himself by means of the Scriptures.

The truth, as many suppose, does not lie midway between these two extremes. The truth must be found in the revelation God has given in His Word.

Many of my readers would probably like for me to settle this question for them, but I doubt the wisdom of such a course. I would prefer that they search out this truth for themselves. If they attempt to do this, certain great truths must always be kept in mind as the search is carried on for God's truth concerning this matter.

1. It must be remembered that God, the Absolute Deity, does not deal with the world directly, but through a Mediator - the Jehovah of the Old Testament and the Lord Jesus Christ of the New. Therefore, the relationship the Absolute Deity bears to the world is just what His Mediator bears to the world.

2. The time in which we live is "the day of man", not "the day of the Lord" or "the day of God". Men often declare such obvious truths as, "there can be no such thing as an accident in a world ruled by God", then proceed to reason as if the world is now ruled by God. But this is not the day of God, it is the day of man and man is being permitted to have his unhindered day. This is the day when men judge and condemn sinners, but God saves them.

3. In Acts 14:16 Paul declares that in times past God suffered (permitted) all nations (Gentiles) to walk in their own ways. He also declares that God's relationship to the nations was limited to maintaining a faithful witness to Himself by doing good, giving rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling men with food and gladness. Some would have us to believe that Paul was mistaken here, that God never permitted anyone to walk after his own ways, let alone all nations. They hold that these men only thought they had liberty to go their own way, for all the time God was acting behind the scenes directing each step they took. I agree with Paul. This passage sets forth in a most positive manner God's relationship to the Gentile after the call of Abraham. There is no evidence that there has been any change in this relationship. God still permits men to walk after their own ways. Nevertheless, in the day of the Lord all nations will be required to walk in His ways.

4. God has declared that His present method, manner or plan of dealing with the world is in grace. The time in which we live is the dispensation or administration of the grace of God. He has declared this, thus placing upon Himself a self-imposed limitation upon the relationship He now bears to the world. A child may exhaust the patience of a human father, but man cannot exhaust the grace of God. When His administration changes from one of grace to one of justice, it will not be because the sin of man exhausted His grace. It will be because He has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained. Acts 17:31.

5. Such passages as **Ephesians 1:11**, "**worketh all things after the counsel of His own will**", have a context. In the passage just mentioned the context sets forth the "all things" that God is so working. This passage cannot be used as proof of something that is not the subject of the chapter.

6. Specific truths must not be made universal. For example: there can be no question but that God hardened Pharaoh's heart; but to go on from this and declare that God either hardens or softens the heart of every man is attempting to build a pyramid by using the capstone as a foundation.

I believe it will be helpful if we use the pages of THE WORD OF TRUTH to discuss this subject. Any reader may feel free to write out and send in their ideas concerning this important question. Some of these will be published. However, I cannot promise to publish all, neither can I enter into personal correspondence upon this subject. I will promise to read all that is, sent to me.

**The End.**

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## ***SPECIOUS CRITICISMS***

The word *specious* has to do with that which is superficially fair, just or correct but which is not so in reality. It describes very well some of the criticisms of my teachings and some of the arguments against my teachings that are appearing in many places.

In the area where I carry on most of my radio ministry, a very lively interest has developed in connection with such subjects as the nature of man, the destiny of man and dispensational truth. I find cause for rejoicing in this, as my greatest desire for the people of God is that they shall be interested in and exercised about the things dealt with in the Word of God. Every means at my disposal is being used to create and encourage interest in and consideration of Biblical subjects. Therefore, I truly rejoice in that interest which is now being manifested in so many places.

When men and women are in the process of being "poured from vessel to vessel" concerning the truth, when they have become aroused and agitated in mind, they usually turn for help to some minister in whom they have confidence. This is only natural, and when it occurs the true servant of Jesus Christ should take advantage of this quickening of interest in order to turn them to the Word of God. However, not all of them do this, as some ministers are guilty of warning those who are stirred that if they persist in their inquiries they are sure to end up in "damnable heresies and unbelief." One minister warned his hearers that we were attempting to "ease them into hell" When such dire warnings have failed to frighten the more hardy souls who know their security in Christ, these same ministers have attempted to make the matter under consideration to appear so complex, obscured and confused that the earnest inquirer feels inclined to throw up his hands, forget the whole matter and settle down again to the pleasantness of church attendance, religious activities and a complete black-out of mind concerning all Biblical subjects. At times the most heartless fallacies in argument are used against these unsuspecting people to lead them away from any honest consideration of these subjects. Tricks worthy of a shyster lawyer, but wholly unworthy of the servant of God are used to keep them from weighing the evidence for or against a man's position. They are asked not to listen to these men, not to read their writings.

The man who fearlessly and faithfully repeats what God's Word declares concerning these subjects knows very well that he will create controversy. What the average professing Christian thinks about God, man, death, baptism, sacraments and about churches is absolutely essential to their mental comfort. Therefore, their prejudices are strong and they resent any criticism of their thoughts and will battle to the death, with no holds barred, if they think that their ideas are going to be overthrown. If a man's teachings threatens their ideas, they become angry, belittling and rejecting in advance all arguments, and often resort to personal attacks against the teacher. Vituperation and name calling are some of their weapons.

When this occurs, the faithful servant cannot flee from the controversy, and refuse to take part in the battle that rages because of what he has taught. He must remember that he has involved hundreds in these issues and that these people look to him for leadership, counsel and guidance in the day of battle.

However, all men who engage in controversy must remember that it will act as a personal and public test of their Christian character. Controversy is apt to bring out the worst in men and reveal flaws in their Christian profession, if there are flaws there. Controversy will reveal whether a man possesses the character of Christ, who when He was reviled, reviled not again. It will reveal whether he can be led to call men names, to hurl invectives and to show a lack of brotherly love. Some men can be wonderful Christians while standing in the pulpit or sitting in a pew, but they cannot be Christians when it comes to discussing doctrinal matters with those who differ with them.

When controversy is of the right quality it has the highest possible value, but when it degenerates to a point that men use dishonest arguments, hurl invectives or call names it serves no good or useful purpose. Our Lord never hesitated to enter into discussion with any who differed with Him, although it is evident that He reserved the right to say "not a word" if He desired to do so.

These words are written in view of the fact that I feel inclined to answer certain criticisms of my teachings, and I desire that my friends shall know the principles that guide me in my part of these discussions. In the past few months several articles have appeared in print. One of these claims to deal with my teachings; and, while the other makes no such claim, the author privately declares that it is the complete refutation of my position.

The first article consists of five mimeograph pages and was written by Pastor J. C. O'Hair, of the *North Shore Church*, Chicago, Illinois. It is entitled, "A Letter Concerning the Soul of Man," and the first page is a copy of a letter he wrote to a friend, then later used as the introduction to his article.

To avoid misrepresentation I will reproduce the letter paragraph by paragraph. The first paragraph is as follows:

**Dear Friend:**

**I am very grateful to you for your good word concerning my radio message on the soul of man. I am happy to hear from you that that message delivered you from the gloom and darkness which you say came into your soul as a result of radio messages which were broadcast on the same Chicago radio station by the Michigan preacher. I would like to ask this question: Why did you continue to listen to his unsound, unscriptural teaching after his first and second messages which you acknowledge brought unbelief and unhappiness to your soul? Christless rationalists and pagan philosophers have for centuries propagated these same vagaries. But it is rather difficult to understand why a man, who claims to love the Lord Jesus Christ and the Word of God, will willfully undermine the faith of Christians and rob them, or endeavor to rob them, of one of the most blessed truths and experiences guaranteed to them in God's Book.**

. From this first paragraph I judge (and I may be wrong) that Mr. O'Hair's letter was written to a woman. I judge it was a woman since men as a rule are not so emotionally unstable as this letter shows the recipient to be. Apparently she had been a listener to Pastor O'Hair's radio ministry and was blissfully happy. Then she listened to two of my messages and was plunged into "gloom and darkness," "unbelief and unhappiness." While in this depth of misery she again listened to Pastor O'Hair's radio message and is now back upon the mountain top basking in the "light and joy of salvation" (see last paragraph of O'Hair's letter), all of which came to her because of Pastor O'Hair's radio message.

My heart goes out to this poor unstable soul, who can be lifted to such great heights by one man's message and cast down to such depths by another man's message. Her faith stands in the wisdom of men and not in the power of God. If this article should by any chance come into her hands, my advice to her is to cease listening to all men and turn to the Word of God.

I heard Mr. O'Hair state over the radio how many thousands of copies of his article had been circulated. It would be interesting to know how many of his readers accepted the mental picture he attempts to put into their minds in this first paragraph. With a few bold strokes of his pen he sets forth "the Michigan preacher" as the bold, bad villain who, wearing the disguise of a servant of Christ, seeks to rob Christians of their "light and joy" plunging them into "gloom and darkness, unbelief and despair." Then Mr. O'Hair presents himself as the hero clad in shining armor who comes to these poor people in gloom and darkness, dispenses to them light and joy and restores them to their former estate. Thus "the Michigan preacher" is classed with "Christless rationalists and pagan philosophers", and declared to be a willful underminer of the faith of Christians.

Those of Mr. O'Hair's followers who do not know me will probably think that the picture is a true one, and that they should rise up and help this bold defender of the faith to strike down this villain from Michigan who would rob them of their "most blessed experience." In view of this, I may be pardoned if I call in a few character witnesses in my behalf. These will be in the form of unsolicited letters which have arrived in the past month.

Miss Winifred L. Perris of England says: "I wish you to know how very much I appreciate your magazine 'The Word of Truth.'" Your exposition of the Scripture is so clear, and to my mind, true to the Word of God. The right division of the Word clears up so many questions, and satisfies the understanding. Your exposition gives one an ever widening and deepening appreciation of the marvelous revelation of God and of His purposes in grace."

Mr. Frank Smith of California says: "My copy of THE DISPENSATION OF THE GRACE OF GOD arrived this week and I read it immediately. What a message! I haven't the words to express my appreciation - it would take the tongue of a Demosthenes to do that. It fairly breathes with life. If every professing Christian could rise above his churchianity and really take a look into the dispensation or administration of God's pure grace, what spiritual profit would come into their lives. Again I thank God for Otis Q. Sellers."

Mrs. Letha Painter of California says: "What a wonderful, wonderful help your writings have been and still are. God certainly showered His blessings upon me when I contacted you."

These few extracts are published, not because they are complimentary, but because Mr. O'Hair so loves to present me as the despoiler of the faith of God's people. To all I would say - I am not so bad as Mr. O'Hair sets me forth, neither am I so good as my friends charitably declare me to be. I am just a sinner saved by the grace of God, and sincerely desirous of uncovering and recovering the truth of God. But, we must go on to consider the second paragraph of Mr. O'Hair's letter.

In dealing with the subject, "the soul of man", this preacher does what he does in his false teaching concerning the elimination of the Lord's Supper for the members of the Body of Christ, and his absurd teaching that the dispensation of the grace of God and the body of Christ of Ephesians and Colossians did not have their historic beginning before Paul's statement in Acts 28:28. He quotes several verses of Scripture, ignoring the very many Scriptures that disprove his wild speculations. Then of course there is a little phrase in Romans 11:25 that fits the case, "wise in your own conceits."

In this paragraph Mr. O'Hair seeks to create confusion rather than to give light. The question of the "soul of man" is linked up with "the elimination of the Lord's Supper," then these are linked with the question of when the "dispensation of the grace of God began." And as if this were not enough he brings in the beginning of the Body of Christ. Such terms as "false teaching", "absurd teaching" and "wild speculations" are interspersed to add to the confusion, and all this is climaxed by using the words of Scripture as an invective to hurl at me, declaring I am wise in my own conceits.

All who are familiar with my writings can judge as to the truth of these accusations. My book on "What Is The Soul" brings every passage in the Word of God wherein the word *soul* is mentioned to bear upon the subject. My writings on the so-called "Lord's Supper" deal with every passage that contains direct teaching concerning this matter. Then concerning what Mr. O'Hair calls this "absurd teaching" that Acts 28:28 marks the dispensational boundary line, a few quotations from his own published writings will be apropos at this point.

Now the question is, how far shall we go with our Dispensationalism to emancipate Christians and the Gospel of Christ from the religion brought over into the New Testament Dispensation from God's program for Israel before and during the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ?

We have learned that we cannot scripturally free the Gospel of Grace from Israel's Kingdom program from religion and signs and symbols by closing the overlapping, or Transition, period with Stephen's message and martyrdom, in the year 35 A. D.; or with Paul's message and program at Ephesus, in the year 54 A. D.; or with Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians in the year 58 A. D. The only intelligent conclusion must be, that the sudden closing of the Book of Acts, in the middle of Paul's epistles, must be the close of the overlapping or Transition period. One proof is that Israel's Kingdom program, religion and signs are absent in Paul's messages to and for the Gentiles after the close of the book of Acts. In those messages the unmixed Gospel of Grace is so clearly set forth by the Apostle to the Gentiles. *Page 16, Bullingerism, Pentecostalism and the Plymouth Brethren.*

Perhaps we are not exaggerating when we say that more than ninety percent of Bible teachers among Fundamentalists offer the inquirer no intelligent Scriptural explanation as to why the Transition period program is or is not God's program, for the Body of Christ during this Dispensation. So called "ultra-dispensationalism" is the only such explanation. Therefore our choice is between the so-called Ultra-dispensationalism and Fanaticism. *Page 17, Bullingerism, Pentecostalism and the Plymouth Brethren.*

It seems to me that Mr. O'Hair has forgotten the days when he was an "ultra-dispensationalist" and did not hesitate to confess it. Now he hurls this term as an epithet at those brethren who refused to turn back when he did.

In his third paragraph Mr. O'Hair makes use of a trick often used by debaters who are more anxious to triumph over their opponents than to discover the truth.

How foolish, in the light of hundreds of Scriptures, to endeavor to prove man's non-existence between death and resurrection because of the statement "Man became a living soul" and because the Hebrew and Greek words translated "soul" are derived from a Hebrew and a Greek word meaning "to breathe".

Before quoting the balance of the paragraph, let us consider this first sentence. The trick used here is to misrepresent a man's teaching by inferring that he teaches certain things, then answer that inference rather than the man's teaching. I have never at any time either by word or writing endeavored to prove man's nonexistence between death and resurrection because of the statement man became a living soul. All I have ever tried to prove by Genesis 2:7 is (1) that God made man of the dust of the earth, (2) that He breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, (3) that man became a living soul; therefore (4) man IS a living soul. I have never at any time used this passage in connection with any teaching about death. The nature of man is the subject of this passage, not the death of man. If we would learn the meaning of death we must go on to a passage such as Genesis 3:19 where death is the subject. There we learn that Adam returned to the ground, that he was dust and to dust he returned.

Furthermore, while I well know that the Hebrew and Greek words for *soul* are derived from a Hebrew and Greek verb meaning to breathe, I am able to say that I have never passed this bit of information on to another person on earth. If any of my friends know this, they did not get it from me. Therefore, for Mr. O'Hair to say that I use this as an argument to "prove man's non-existence between death and resurrection" is a deliberate misrepresentation, made solely for the purpose of leading some who do not know me to believe that I use foolish and fragile arguments to defend my position. Neither do I believe in "man's non-existence between death and resurrection". My father, whom I buried less than a year ago, exists as much today as he ever did, but not as a living person or soul. I believe that men are dead between death and resurrection, and do not believe in their non-existence. Let us consider the balance of the paragraph.

In Isaiah 42:1 and Matthew 12:18, we read that God speaks of "My Soul". Should we deduce from this that God is a soul? When Christ's soul was exceeding sorrowful unto death (Matthew 26:38) at the time He was to pour out His soul unto death (Isaiah 53:12) and lay down His soul that He might take it up again (John 10:17-18), any sane, spiritual Christian knows that Christ was speaking of something more than His breath. The wrath of God on the soul of man, in Romans 2:9 and 10, or "save a soul from death" in James 5:20, mean far more than breath. In Colossians 3:23 the word "heartily", in Greek is "from the soul". How absurd to have this read "from the breath". Then think of substituting the word "man" for soul in those Scriptures, or in Matthew 10:28, "destroy both soul and body in hell". .

Mr. O'Hair continues to infer that I teach things that are utterly ridiculous, then answer or ridicule his own ridiculous misrepresentations of my teaching, leading his readers to believe he has refuted me. I have never "deduced" from the fact that God speaks of "My Soul" that He is a soul. In all passages where "My soul" is used in reference to God it means "I". For example in Matthew 12:18 "My beloved, in whom My soul is well pleased", means "My beloved, in whom I am well pleased". If Mr. O'Hair has any better explanation of the term "My soul" used in reference to God, I would like to hear it.

Next Mr. O'Hair infers that I believe that the soul is the breath, a thing that never entered my mind, let alone being my teaching. He classes me among the insane and unscriptural for teaching something which I never taught and do not believe. He is far more desirous of misrepresenting me than he is in getting the truth. In his final paragraph he says:

I am glad to know that the light and joy of salvation, your present heavenly position in Christ and your assurance that Philippians 1:23 and 2 Corinthians 5:8 mean what they say have come to you because of my radio message. I am sending herewith a mimeograph copy of that message. Am also sending another message concerning his "Ultra-Dispensatiomilism".

Very Sincerely Yours, J. C. O'Hair

No comment is necessary on this paragraph. The radio message of which the letter is the introduction is of the same nature as the letter, a discordant mass of inferences which are supposed to be my teachings, most of it dealing with the breath not being the soul. As stated before this is not my teaching as my writings on the soul will demonstrate. Space will not permit me to deal with it, but I cannot refrain from quoting one paragraph.

When the Lord Jesus, in John 6:50, said "that a man may eat thereof and not die", He did not mean that believers would not die physically, but He meant that when they believed, and passed out of death into life (John 5:24), they would not die when they experienced physical death; for in John 6:51 He adds, "shall live forever". If the saved man, like the unsaved man, is simply a soul and ceases to be his own conscious self when he ceases to breathe, because he is dead and without knowledge and consciousness, then the Lord Jesus did not mean what He said in John 6:50-51 and 11:25-26. Surely a saint, who has passed out of death into life and has a body that is dead because of sin (Romans 8:10), will not pass back out of life into death when he ceases to breathe and certainly no intelligent, Spirit-taught student of the Bible means what he says when he says that a person loses his soul when he ceases to breathe, because "psuche" comes from "psucho" which means "to breathe".

In all kindness, but in honesty, I must say that that paragraph is the worst jumble I have ever seen anyone try to pass off as Bible exposition or honest argument. Stephen Leacock tells of a man who mounted his horse and rode off in all directions at the same time. I believe that this describes my brother John O'Hair, although I am more inclined to view him in the light of that paragraph as the man who walked bare-footed into the dark room carpeted with sticky fly-paper. But enough has been said, and I rest my case. I have another criticism to deal with.

## **THE ANNIHILATION OF THE SOUL, BY HARRY BULTEMA**

In times of controversy, when men are called upon to decide the correctness of arguments pro and con, they should be sure that they have some little understanding of the principles of logic so that they can follow the Scriptural admonition to "judge righteous judgment". The average textbook on logic contains a list of fallacies which are classified in accordance with the logical principles they



violate. When one becomes familiar with these he is able to detect dishonest modes of thought which he meets in arguments and speeches. In his pamphlet of twenty pages Mr. Bultema uses about every trick known to debaters who seek to triumph more than to set forth the truth. He makes no claim that he is answering my teaching, for he deals with doctrines that I do not believe. Nevertheless, he privately makes the claim that his pamphlet cuts the ground from under my feet. The pamphlet consists of an introduction followed by fifteen numbered paragraphs. The full title is "Annihilation of the Soul. . . A False Doctrine", and the sub-title is "Is the Soul at Death Annihilated?"

The average reader may fail to note that Mr. Bultema gives no definition of "the soul", neither does he at any time reveal what he means when he uses this word. Therefore, the whole pamphlet deals with something in his mind which is never made plain to his readers. He does not define his terms. Of what value is the consideration as to whether something is annihilated or not when we do not know what the speaker means by the word he uses. I honestly insist that I do not know what he means or what idea he intends to convey by the word *soul*. If any of his friends feel that they do, I will be glad to hear from them. Let us consider his first paragraph.

Is the soul at death annihilated? If there should be some who do not like this last word, then we could use one of the following synonyms; nullified, abrogated, extinguished, quashed, canceled, abolished, ended, exterminated, made extinct, or obliterated, but eschatologically the word in the caption is the word generally used for the thought of some in England and here, that the soul is simply brought to naught at death so that it does not exist in any form or place whatsoever. The reasoning is as follows; God breathed into the body and thus man became a living soul and when man breathes the last there is simply no soul, he has breathed it out. Dead, it is non-existent.

Sir Robert Anderson has said, "Nothing is more unfair in controversy than to state in our own words the tenets of others from whom we differ". This Mr. Bultema does constantly for he is better able to answer his garbled version of our teachings than what we actually teach. Speaking for myself and for my fellow-laborers in truth, in England as well as America, I wish to say that we do not believe man as a body, man as a soul, or man as a spirit is annihilated, nullified, abrogated, destroyed, or anything else at death. We believe that men die and that they are dead until resurrection brings them back to life again. We do not believe that death is the end of any man, for we believe in the resurrection of the dead. Neither do we believe that the soul is the breath, or that when man breathes out his last breath that he breaths out his soul. But, let us go on to Mr. Bultema's next paragraph.

According to W. Brown there were a few years ago no less than nine distinctive and antagonistic schools of psychology. Strictly speaking there is not yet a science of psychology, but there are rather the psychologies of the various sects and schools - and this is one of them. Annually 3,000 psychological publications appear, but they have added next to nothing to the knowledge about the human soul. J. S. Haldane says; "Psychology is still on about the same level as chemistry was in the days of the alchemists." Modern psychology is like Mike who claimed that he could lick the world, and when an Englishman knocked him down, he said; "I see I have taken in too much territory." Psychologists use terms, e.g., Oedipus complex, sublimation, abreaction, ambivalence, libido - and other jargon and they have no clear notion about them among themselves. The Bible psychologies of Delitzsch, Bavinck, Los and others may be splendid works, but they have added precious little to the real knowledge of the human soul. The Bible uses the word soul nearly a thousand times and in about fifty-seven varieties of meaning. Then there are the closely related concepts of spirit, heart, life, and mind. All this, and much more, should make us, to use a phrase of Dr. A. Kuyper, "schuchter in het heilige," i. e., careful in sacred

matters.

When that paragraph is added up it totals absolutely nothing. It will probably frighten some and cause them to abandon their quest to discover from the Word of God what God has revealed about the nature of man. It is a well known fact that in both sacred and secular psychological works there is a vast amount of confusion, and Mr. Bultema feels that this should make us a bit wary at ever hoping to obtain the truth. However, the confusion is in the writings of men and not in the Word of God. The big words he throws in to frighten the simple have no place whatsoever in any discussion of Christian doctrine. For example, "oedipus-complex" is a term used by psychologists to describe that type of abnormality wherein a mother has an unnatural love for her son; "sublimation" is a word used by the Freudians to describe the act of shifting sex motivations into socially acceptable modes of conduct; and "libido" is just a strange word used by psychologists to describe a man's sexual desires. Again I say, not one of these words have any place in a discussion among Christians concerning the nature and destiny of man. They are thrown in here to confuse and frighten those timid souls who might dare to consider the subject.

However, even if unbelieving psychologists are confused and discordant in their theories, and, even if writers on Biblical psychology have added precious little to our knowledge of the soul, we can separate ourselves from their mass of theories, turn to the Word of God, and there we will find the air to be pure and clear. There the truth is simple. It is not confused with the jargon of the psychologists. There we read in words so simple that they are shocking to both the ecclesiastical and the worldly scholar:

**And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. Genesis 2:1.**

The two paragraphs already quoted set forth the character of Mr. Bultema's pamphlet. This character is maintained throughout the rest of its pages. In one paragraph, he takes up the matter of life, and declares that we confuse *life* with *existence* and, therefore, we make death to be non-existence. This charge has been made numerous times by as many writers. In fact, it has been made so many times that those who make it are simply repeating the accusations of other critics. None ever supplies any proof in the form of a quotation to support their charge. They seem to delight in making this accusation as it permits them to pull out all the stops and tramp on the bass pedals. This charge is a straw man, set up solely because they know they can knock it down by substituting the word *exist* for *life* in passages where the latter word occurs, and *non-existence* in passages where the word *death* occurs. Mr. Bultema does this with great effect, but he has done nothing more than answer something which no Christian believes.

I wish to inform Mr. Bultema and all others who feel led to criticize my teachings that I know the difference between *life* and *existence* and that I do not believe these two are the same. Inanimate things exist, but they do not have life. Men have both life and existence. If they die they still exist, but without life. If at death men ceased to exist, we would need no caskets, cemeteries or undertakers. However, dead men do exist, so such things as these must be provided for them.

Mr. Bultema continues his arguments through many confusing paragraphs, always repudiating what someone else believes, but never setting forth from the Word his own views in the matter. As he nears the end of the book it becomes plain that he feels his arguments are unconvincing. Therefore, he steps out of the Word and seeks to prove from human experiences that men are alive between death and resurrection. *Here* are his words:

At death the martyrs and other godly pilgrims have often felt and testified that Jesus or the celestials beckoned them. The dying have often exclaimed that they saw Jesus, heard wondrous singing, and felt the glory of that better land somehow in their soul and they have

time and again rapturously welcomed the land of delight beyond. But alas it was all only illusion, for the weary pilgrims have not yet arrived at home and they never will, because they have been blotted out of existence. What a gruesome thought to think that *God* first filled the soul of the weary, longing pilgrims with rapture about the desired haven and the end of the often wearisome road, only to plunge them into the dark abyss of nothingness.

In this paragraph Mr. Bultema calls upon his readers to settle this whole matter emotionally rather than by the Word of God. He abandons the Scripture and proves his point by the questionable experiences of men at the time of death. Mr. Bultema has declared many times that visions are not God's order *for* today. *Here* he gives a place to the visions men have at the time of death. If he gives credence to these, then what about all the visions that men claim to see when they are not at the point of death. I brand these death-bed visions as questionable because so many of them claim to see and hear angels. Furthermore, if the things seen by Roman Catholics are admitted as evidence, then the whole case *for* Catholicism is proved. Some of them at death claim to see Mary holding the infant Jesus.

Mr. Bultema would like for his readers to think that if men at death do not enter at once into all that God has provided *for* them, they never will enter into it. Has he never heard of the resurrection of the dead? If so, then why does he insist that death must be the door through which man enters into life with God? Of what value is resurrection if man enters into such glorious blessings at death?

If men at death are ushered into some state of bliss, why did God say to Adam: **In the sweat of your face will you eat bread, till you return unto the ground; for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and unto dust you will return. Genesis 3:19.**

If men at death enter into life in another place, why did God send Isaiah to Hezekiah with this message: **Set thine house in order: for thou shalt DIE and not LIVE. Isaiah 38:1.**

If the dead are as much alive as the living, why would the Spirit of God lead John to declare: **But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. Revelation 20:5.**

Consider also some of the words of the Lord Jesus:

**Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. John 5:25.**

**Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead. John 6:49.**

**Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. John 11:14.**

Simple statements such as these contain more truth about the meaning of death than all the tomes of the Library of Congress. But such straightforward statements such as these seem to have very little place in the thinking of Mr. Bultema. He would do well to give these truths to those of his people who are hoping for fresh water from the Word upon these subjects. But he prefers to pull down from his shelves all the confusing, contradictory, theological works of men then hurl their complexities at the people so as to frighten them away from any further investigation of the Word. He may succeed in doing this with some. But there are others that he cannot frighten. They freely admit that they know nothing about the "Oedipus-complex", and they do not seek for knowledge of this subject. But they do know that they have the Word of God and the Spirit of God. They are determined to continue their search for the truth in spite of persistent efforts to confuse their thoughts. They know that the Spirit of Truth is well able to lead the simple soul into all Truth, if Truth be his sole and greatest desire.

**The End.**

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# ***LESSONS FROM JEREMIAH***

**(Continued from Vol. IX, No. 5)**

## **Jeremiah's Inquiry 9:12**

**Who is the wise man, that may understand this? and who is he to whom the mouth of the Lord hath spoken, that he may declare it, for what the land perisheth and is burned up like a wilderness, that none passeth through.**

Having declared that Jerusalem will be heaps, ruins and a den of dragons, and that the cities of Judah will be desolate, Jeremiah inquires if there is at least one man who understands this, or if there is a man to whom the Lord has spoken that he may declare the reason for this. He is astonished that no man sees or can declare the cause of these afflictions.

## **Jehovah's Answer 9:13-14**

**And the Lord saith, Because they have forsaken My law which I set before them, and have not obeyed My voice, neither walked therein; but have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them.**

When no man arose to answer Jeremiah's inquiry, the Lord answered and told why the land perished. It was because they had forsaken Jehovah's law, walked after their own ideas about Jehovah and followed Baalim.

## **Judah's Judgment Declared 9:15-16**

**Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink. I will scatter them also among the heathen, whom neither they nor their fathers have known; and I will send a sword after them, till I have consumed them.**

Their portion is to be very bitter indeed. They are to be scattered among the nations and consumed with the sword.

## **The Mourners Called 9:17**

**Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider ye, and call for the mourning women, that they may come; and send for cunning women, that they may come.**

They are told to call the professional wailers to sing the mournful dirges of death. They did this when men died - so let them do so in view of a greater tragedy, the death of their nation. Let them get those who are most skillful in the mourning business.

## **Jeremiah Speaks 9:18**

**And let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush out with waters.**

Jeremiah takes up the words of Jehovah and calls for the mourning women to come quickly and lead them in the weeping till their eyes run down with tears and their eyelids gush with water. He knows that Jehovah's threat is no idle one.

## **The Helpless People Mourn 9:19**

**For a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion, How are we spoiled! we are greatly confounded, because we have forsaken the land, because our dwellings have cast us out.**

A wail is heard from Zion. The people say "How terrible is our ruin, we are bitterly ashamed because we have had to leave our land, and they have cast down our habitations.

## **Jeremiah to the Mourners 9:20-22**

**Yet hear the word of the Lord, O ye women, and let your ear receive the word of His mouth, and teach your daughters wailing, and every one her neighbor lamentation. For death is come up into our windows, and is entered into our palaces, to cut off the children from without, and the young men from the streets. Speak, Thus saith the Lord, Even the carcasses of men shall fall as dung upon the open field, and as the handful after the harvestman, and none shall gather them.**

He calls upon the women to hear the Word of the Lord. They had been the cause of much sin in Israel and now they must feel the woe of her calamities. They are to teach lamentations, for death is come. It had climbed through their windows and entered into their halls, striking the children so that they could not play in the streets and the young men so that they could not go to their work. The dead bodies of men shall be nothing more than the dung of an animal dropped in the open field, or like sheaves left behind by the reaper with none to gather and bury them. This was fulfilled in the war and plague that followed the invasion of Judah.

## **Jehovah Instructs 9:23-24**

**Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.**

This exhortation is of universal application. Wisdom, might and riches! These are the three chief things that men boast of and trust in. Man's greatest need is a true knowledge of God, or, the knowledge of the true God. We cannot trust a person if we do not know him, and the reason that men are not able to trust God is because they do not know Him. They imagine things about God and pass these off to themselves as knowledge. But the true knowledge of God comes from His own revelation, His Word, the Bible. Jesus Christ' said: "Thy Word is Truth", and it is in the Word alone that we can find truth about God. Abraham's servant praised Jehovah because He had not left his master destitute of truth. Many men have wealth, worldly wisdom and power, but are destitute of the truth of God. God would have men to know that He practices kindness, righteousness and justice upon the earth. These are the things in which He delights.

## **Jehovah Speaks 9:25-26**

**Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will punish all them which are circumcised with the uncircumcised; Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon, and Moab, and all that are in the utmost comers, that dwell in the wilderness: for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart.** There is no respect of persons with God in relationship to judgment for sin. See Romans 2:10-11. By a figure of speech the word *circumcision* came to signify related to God and *uncircumcision* signified lack of relationship. God never expected the Gentiles to be circumcised. The nations mentioned here were not related to God, and while Israel bore the outward sign of relationship, she was unrelated in heart.

## **Jehovah Instructs Israel Concerning Idols 10:1-5**

**Hear ye the word which the Lord speaketh unto you, O house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good.**

Just before these words were spoken, Jehovah has declared that He exercises or practices lovingkindness, righteousness and justice. His righteousness made it impossible for Him to ignore the sin of Israel; His justice required that the threatened penalty be executed; but His lovingkindness leads Him to give His people instructions to guide them while they were in exile and captivity. They are not to learn, that is, to become accustomed, to the ways of the nations. They would see so much idolatry and witness so many idolatrous practices that it could easily become commonplace to them. They are to retain their repugnance, their sense of moral indignation against these things, never to accept them as being normal conduct.

This is a truth that every child of God needs to remember as he walks in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Some sins have become so commonplace that the believer soon becomes accustomed to them and in time is found practicing them himself. The world wears down our resistance and saps us of our moral indignation in regard to practices that cannot possibly be right in the sight of God. Before going into exile, Israel was warned against this.

They are not to be dismayed at the signs of the heavens because the nations are dismayed at such things. Such things as eclipses, comets and meteoric showers brought great dismay to the nations that had forgotten God. They are warned to pay no attention to these things. Superstitions of any kind have no place in the life of the child of God.

The heathen idols were such fearful looking things that the faint-hearted in Israel might feel that they did have the power that their worshippers attributed to them. God traces the history of these idols. They began with a tree cut down in the forest. Just think of a god who in his beginning was felled by a woodchopper's axe. Then the carpenter or woodworker lopped off the branches, stripped it of its bark, and shaped it by further cutting to give it its form. It is overlaid with silver or gold and finally it is spiked in place so that it cannot fall over. These idols were stiff and straight as the palm tree, but they could not speak. They had to be carried about, because they could not move. Nevertheless, all manner of miraculous power is attributed to them. God told Israel not to be afraid of them. They cannot do evil, and it is not in them to do good. See Isa. 44:9-20.

The deification of idols is not as common today as it was in Jeremiah's day. The common practice today is to deify an organization and to attribute to it powers and privileges that belong only to God.

## **Jeremiah Worships 10:6-10**

**Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord; thou art great, and Thy name is great in might. Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto thee. But they are altogether brutish and foolish: the stock is a doctrine of vanities. Silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, the work of the workman, and of the hands of the founder: blue and purple is their clothing: they are all the work of cunning men. But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall be able to abide his indignation.**

The words of Jehovah about idols awakened in Jeremiah a spirit of adoration and appreciation of the true God. This is true worship. It is worship in spirit and in truth. The Father is ever seeking worshippers such as this. He declares that there is none like Jehovah, a great God whose Name is great in might. How can men refrain from reverencing Him? the God who is the ruler over all nations. That is what men owe to Him, for there is none like Him. However, even among the wise men of the nations there were none to give Him His due. They are stupid and senseless. The core of their idols is but wood, overlaid with silver and gold, clothed with blue and purple, but it is all the work of skillful men. No contribution of any kind, no addition whatsoever has ever been made to the true God. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who has ever given Him advice, O, who has ever given Him anything. See Romans 11:34-36.

### **The Witness of the Exiles 19:11**

**Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens,**

This is the only verse in the book of Jeremiah that is in the Chaldean language. Otherwise all is in Hebrew. It is intended as a confession of their faith while in exile. For example: We might imagine that an eclipse of the sun has appeared and all the Chaldeans are greatly exercised. They attribute this to their idols, and there is a mad rush to the temple to perform their rituals, offer their sacrifices and pay their obligations. The idolatrous priests probably welcome this as it gives them an opportunity to get their back salaries. These frightened people would fain sweep Israel along in their rush to the temple but the Israelite is not to go with them. Neither is he to argue nor denounce. He is to stand and say in their own language: "The gods that have not made the heaven and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens."

### **Jeremiah Continues His Worship 10:12-16**

**He has made the earth by His power, He hath established the world by His wisdom, and has stretched out the heavens by His discretion. When He uttereth His voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; He maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of His treasures. Every man is brutish in his knowledge: every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them. They are vanity, and the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish. The portion of Jacob is not like them: for He is the former of all things; and Israel is the rod of His inheritance: The Lord of hosts is His name.**

It appears that verse 11 being in the Chaldean language is to be their simple confession when invited to participate in the fears and worship of the idolaters. If this simple confession arouses any interest, they are provided with an additional witness in verses 12 to 16. Here Jehovah is contrasted with idols. He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things. The earth exhibits His power, the order exhibits His wisdom and the heavens His intelligence. He speaks and at His command there is a tumult of waters in the heavens for the purpose of refreshing the earth. He draws up into heaven vapor from all parts of the earth, then with His lightning He precipitates them as rain, driving them by the wind to the places He would water. Man's vaunted knowledge keeps him from discerning this, and the makers of idols is deceived by his own work.

### **Jehovah to the People 10:17-18**

**Gather up the wares out of the land, O inhabitant of the fortress. For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at this once, and will distress them, that they may find it so.**

The fortress is Jerusalem. They are to prepare to leave, then abandon the city, for the Lord is going to cast out those who dwell there so that in their distress they will know the truth of what He said.

### **The People Lament 10:19-22**

**Woe is me for my hurt! my wound is grievous: but I said, Truly this is my grief, and I must bear it. My tabernacle is spoiled, and all my cords are broken: my children are gone forth of me, and they are not: there is none to stretch forth my tent anymore, and to set up my curtains. For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the Lord: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered. Behold, the voice of the bruit is come, and a great commotion out of the north country, to make the cities of Judah desolate, and a den of dragons.**

These are the words of the helpless people, and they express their resignation. They acknowledge that their "dwelling (tabernacle) is laid waste because the rulers of the people had not sought the Lord. There is already a voice (noise) of a rumor or report (bruit) which tells that the invasion has already begun.

### **Jeremiah Prays 10:23-25**

**0 Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. 0 Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing. Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name: for they have eaten up Jacob, and devoured him, and consumed him, and made his habitation desolate.**

Jeremiah was an Israelite, a true patriot who deeply loved the land of Israel, her cities and her people. There is every evidence that he did not desire to say the things the Lord caused him to say. In later chapters this rebellion in spirit is more clearly revealed. Here he acquiesces to the word and way of the Lord and declares that the way of man is not within himself, neither is it possible for man to properly direct his steps. He well realizes how different his life, thoughts and message would have been if the Lord had not laid hold of him. He seeks further instruction and prays for retribution upon the devourers of Israel.

### **(End of this Study series)**

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## ***QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS***

### **Gathering in His Name - Matthew 18:20**

**QUESTION:** Some information on Matthew 18:20 would be appreciated just what constitutes a gathering of two or three to be in His name. It seems plain that three or more could gather together for a time of social fellowship and not be gathered in His name. Could this same group by some act suddenly change from a gathering that was not in His name to one that is?

**ANSWER:** Your question is a good one. The answer to it depends upon what the words "in MY name" mean. They appear prominently in Matthew 18:20: "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." In his reference Bible, Dr. Scofield declares that this is "the simplest form of a local church." This is a gratuitous assumption, that is, something assumed as being true for which there is no authority or reason. It is an attempt to clothe the assemblies of men with divine authority.



The average Christian gladly takes it for granted that if two, three or more assemble for prayer or Bible study it naturally follows that they have gathered in the name of Christ. If this is true, it would mean that every gathering of two or three for these purposes becomes automatically an assembly in the name of Christ, guaranteeing that He will be in their midst. Innumerable have been the pastors who, facing a small attendance at some service, has consoled himself by saying to the few who were present that "while not many have come out, yet we should remember the words of the Lord that where two or three are gathered in His name He will be in the midst."

Men hardly dare to take a close look at the accurate meaning of "gathered together in My name." By ignoring the actual meaning of these words and by severing this text from its contexts, they are able to use it as a pious platitude to give divine authority to their gatherings and to claim the presence of Christ in their assemblies.

This verse begins with the word *for*. This shows that it is related to, flows out of and gets its meaning from whatever precedes it. The context has to do with one brother who has sinned against another. Four definite steps are set forth for him to follow in such a case. He is (1) to go tell him about it privately. (2) If he refuses to right the wrong he is to go back the second time taking one or two others with him so that every word that passes between them might be attested by two or three witnesses. (3) If he refuses to hear them, he is to lay the matter before the church. (4) If he refuses to hear the church, he is to be treated as a heathen and a publican, that is, as a Gentile and tax-gatherer.

We who live under the dispensation of the grace of God can take the first of these steps, but to take the second, third or fourth would not be worthy of our calling. We are expressly instructed to forgive one another even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us. See Eph. 4:32. An act like this is worthy of our calling, but any act such as taking along witnesses, telling it to the church or treating a man as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer is out of harmony with the grace we enjoy and the grace God is showing to men. Furthermore, how can I regard a man as a Gentile when I am one myself, and how can I regard him as a tax-gatherer when such an office is a badge of honor. These circumstances are foreign to us and to attempt to apply them today or to be guided by them today can only result in confusion. The church spoken of here was composed of His disciples who had been separated from guilty Israel.

Following these instructions the Lord declared that whatever they bound on earth would be bound in heaven and whatever they loosed on earth would be loosed in heaven. In other words, if they on earth as an act of judgment considered a man to be an outsider and rejected, heaven would ratify that sentence. Furthermore, He declared that this was in no way dependent upon a great company of people doing it, for if two of them agreed on earth concerning anything whatever they shall ask, it would be done for them of His Father which is in heaven. This is proof positive that judicial matters in the assembly were not to be settled by the votes or decisions of the majority. Then our Lord declares, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."

Since this whole portion has to do with offenses, judicial actions and penalties, also the powers and rights of the assembly to hear cases, judge and mete out penalties, then this verse has to do with these things also. To gather in the name of Christ is to assemble under His authority; therefore, with full power to act concerning any matter that comes under the jurisdiction of the assembly.

Now and then certain assemblies spring up in this country which are called "kangaroo courts." These are courts without any authority from the federal or state governments. They do not convene in the name of *The United States* or in the name of any of the forty eight states. Men have been judged, sentenced and punished by them even though these courts lack every vestige of authority.

Today no two, three or two or three thousand can assemble and rightfully claim that they do it in the name of Christ. The privilege of doing this was given to the believers in Israel, and the right to do this was revoked even for them when the salvation of God was sent to the Gentiles at Acts 28:28. No such right or privilege was ever given to those in our calling. If men wish to assemble for prayer, praise, worship, study or service to others they have every right to do so. They can organize and seek to perpetuate their organizations if they care to do so. If officers are needed in connection with their assemblies they have every right to appoint them just so long as they do not fasten names from the Scripture upon them. If property is needed for their assemblies they have every right to rent or purchase it. But if at any time these assemblies attempt to legislate or judge concerning any matter that touches a man's personal relationship to God, they are kangaroo courts, destitute of all authority no matter how many passages of Scripture they quote to prove that Christ is in the midst of them.

The privileges and promises set forth in Matthew 18:15-20 are specific and far-reaching. To attempt to claim them or apply them now will serve no purpose but to bring reproach on His name and His words. Whether two or three or two or three thousand agree on any request it will make no difference in this dispensation of grace.

### **Death and Our Position in Heavenly Places**

**QUESTION:** Ephesians 2 tells us that we are seated in heavenly places in Christ. No matter what the term "heavenly places" may mean, it is plain that we are not seated upon the earth. I know you believe this. In view of this your theories concerning the dead are preposterous. You teach that at death we are taken from the heavenly places and put into the grave, then at resurrection we are taken from the grave and put back in heavenly places. This does not make sense.

**ANSWER:** I grant that what you say does not make sense, but you should not blame me for this. I have never said, thought or taught any such idea as you have set forth. You have every right to differ with me, but you do not have the right to say what I believe or teach. I judge that it is hoping for too much for me to expect that those who differ from me shall believe that I try to be an honest student who has given or else will give full consideration to every possible argument against my present position. Before I took my stand on these doctrines my views were tentatively presented before groups of students, and they were urged to present every possible argument against them. The matter which you now bring up was first called to my attention ten years ago by a brother in Chicago. It presented no problem then, and it presents none now. Clever speakers will use it as an argument against my position that the dead are dead until the resurrection. They do this before unthinking people who know little of the Word. In regard to the Ephesian passage certain facts are obvious:

We are in the world and not in heavenly places. I will wager you that if I set out to find you, you will be in the city and state and at the address you have given. You will not be in heavenly places.

The word seated does not refer to physical position. The British King is seated upon the British throne whether he is in London or not.. Jesus Christ is seated on David's throne even though that throne has no present existence.

It is a divine principle that God calls the things that are not as if they were. See Romans 4:17. He does this so that our faith will always be active. Therefore, God can declare that we are seated in the heavenly places in Christ because this is our future destiny. It is now true in truth. Some day it will be true in fact or reality.

As to our present location we are in the world and upon the earth. As to our position before God we are seated jointly with Christ in heavenly places. Since neither life nor death can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, death will not alter our position in the least, even though it will change our physical state and location. In life, in death and in resurrection the position does not change.

Seated with Christ is not an office like the high priest of Israel held. They were not permitted to continue in that office by reason of death. See Hebrews 7:23. But our position is not an office. It is a blessing - yes, a spiritual blessing. The intervention of death cannot change it. If this blessing is yours, death will not steal it from you. It will be waiting for you at resurrection.

### **Could Passover Be Observed One Day Early**

**QUESTION:** How could the Lord and His disciples have been observing the passover one full day in advance of passover day? This would have been a violation of the law of God which designated the exact day upon which the passover was to be observed. See Leviticus 23:5.

**ANSWER:** This question comes to us repeatedly, but it offers no problem to the one who has nothing to prove and whose sole desire is to know the truth of God. It arises out of another question: Did the Lord and His disciples in the upper room before His crucifixion observe the passover? Many seem almost anxious to prove that it was not, in spite of the fact that the word *passover* is repeated to the point of redundancy in Matthew 26, Mark 14 and Luke 22.

In **Matthew 26:18** the Lord said "**My time is at hand, I will keep the passover at thy house with My disciples.**" It may not have been the fourteenth day of Nisan, but it was His time, and He being Lord of the passover had every right to advance the observance a full twenty-four hours if He cared to do so. Furthermore, there is nothing unusual in this. In Numbers 9:10-11, God declared that if men were ceremonially unclean or on a journey they could keep the passover one month later. Therefore, if a man could keep it thirty days late because he was on a journey, no problem is created by the Lord observing it one day early in view of His journey to the Cross upon the day when it ordinarily would have been observed. The evidence is overwhelming that when the Lord said, "This do in remembrance of Me," He was observing the passover.

### **Concerning Ecclesiastes**

**QUESTION:** How can Ecclesiastes be spiritual truth when there are other Scriptures that deny so many of its statements? Here are a few I have considered in comparison. (1) Eccles. 1:4, "the earth abideth forever", with 2 Peter 3:10-13: Matthew 24:35, "heaven and earth shall pass away". (2) Eccles. 1:9, "there is no new thing under the sun", with 2 Cor. 5:17 "all things are become new". (3) Eccles. 1:13 "search out by wisdom", with 1 Cor. 1:20, "God has made foolish the wisdom of this world", (4) Eccles. 1:16-17 "my heart had great experience of wisdom" and "I gave my heart to know wisdom", with 1 Cor. 2:13 "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth" also 1 Cor. 1:30, 1 Cor. 1:24. (5) Eccles. 3:19, "men hath no preeminence above a beast," with Genesis 1:26-27, "let us make man in our own image", and 1 Cor. 15:39, "all flesh is not the same. (6) Eccles. 3:22 "a man should rejoice in his own works" with Titus 3:5 and Eph. 2:9 "not of works".

**ANSWER:** Concerning Ecclesiastes *The Companion Bible* says: "It has been rejected by some on account of its alleged Theology. Theology is man's reasoning about the *Word* of God, as Science, so called, is man's reasoning about the *Works* of God: Because Genesis does not agree with Science that book is rejected by Rationalists. Because Ecclesiastes does not agree with Theology, this book is rejected, as uninspired, even by some Evangelical theologians. If one book is ruled out, then another may be.

Doubt is thus cast upon the whole Bible and we have no 'Word of God' at all! If this book be not part of the Word and words of God, then we have no reply to those who reject Genesis, Daniel, Jonah or the Apocalypse, who do so on the same ground of human reasoning. If the inner consciousness of each individual is to decide what is and what is not Scripture, there is an end of Divine Revelation altogether."

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Questions such as these reveal the confusion into which many get themselves from wrongly handling the Word of God. In regard to the first question it would have been just as simple to show that Jeremiah did not speak the truth because he said of Jerusalem "this city shall remain for ever" (Jer. 17:25), whereas the Lord said "heaven and earth shall pass away". The Hebrew word translated "ever" in Eccles. 1:4 is *olam*. This corresponds to the Greek word *aion* which means age or period of time. What Solomon said was that the earth abides or remains in relationship to the eon. By "the eon" he meant that period of time called "the heaven and new earth". Concerning the second question it is true that there is nothing new under the sun, that is, upon the earth, but some things are new in the sight of God. The third question is a misquotation as Solomon never exhorted anyone to "search out by wisdom". He said he gave his heart to seek and to search out by wisdom the meaning of all things that happen upon the earth, but found no satisfactory answer. And no answer will be found no matter how many men search for it by wisdom. God has made foolish the wisdom of this world. The conflict set forth in question four is imaginary. Solomon did possess great wisdom. Question five is based upon a misquotation, a statement removed from its context. The context deals with death and declares that as one dies so dies the other for man is not above a beast in the matter of death. This is such obvious truth that it would be foolish to deny it. Would any dare say that death is an experience that comes only to beasts? The final question arises from failure to understand the passage. Solomon teaches that instead of men always hoping for some better thing next year, they should be satisfied with and rejoice in what they have today. In other words: Today we are alive, so enjoy it. Tomorrow we may be dead.

**QUESTION:** In Genesis 3:19 it says "for dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return". Can anyone say that they were once dust? As I see it Adam was the only one formed of dust. An unborn baby before it ever breathes is alive. Would that mean that it never had the spirit of God if it died before birth?

**ANSWER:** I can say that I was once, and still am dust. The only part about me that is not dust is the life I have from God. Men are soil and cannot live without the soil. Whether we eat meat or vegetables, we are eating soil. Adam was the only one God formed of the dust; nevertheless, all his descendants are dust. I cannot help you concerning unborn babies. I say to you in the words of Solomon: "As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all". Eccles. 11:5.

## Moses and Elijah

**QUESTION:** The appearance of Moses and Elijah upon the Mount of Transfiguration seems to indicate that the dead are alive. If not, how could they appear there. "Dead men tell no tales," it is often said, and I would add that they do not appear on mountains. What is your explanation of this.

**ANSWER:** If I should say that the appearance of Lazarus at the supper Mary and Martha made for the Lord (John 12:2) indicates that the dead are alive, you would quickly correct my false argument by reminding me that Lazarus had been raised from the dead. From this incident we learn that when men who have died are seen anywhere they have been raised from the dead whether there is any record of it or not. Although Elijah never died, Moses did, and for him to be seen on the Mount, resurrection was necessary. However, I do not believe that Moses was raised from the dead in order to appear upon the Mount. Jesus Christ called this a vision. Matthew 17:9. Being a man of faith, I never hesitate to take Him at His word and think accordingly. Visions are never made of actual happenings. If it is a reality it cannot be a vision, for visible objects cannot be so designated. If this were a vision, then Moses and Elijah were not there personally. Jesus Christ called it a vision. I agree with you that dead men do not appear upon mountains. Why not believe God when He has so distinctly said, "Moses my servant is dead." Joshua 1:2.

## If Israel Had Received Him

**QUESTION:** Would Christ have set up His kingdom at His first coming if the Jews had received Him as their Messiah?

**ANSWER:** No, He would not have. He offered Himself to the people, not the Kingdom. The common people heard Him gladly, but the rulers rejected Him and the people acquiesced. God surrendered Him to the rulers and they crucified Him. If He had surrendered Him to the Gentiles, they would have done the same. However, if Israel had received Him and the Gentiles had crucified Him, the stage would have been set for the great tribulation and His return. -I do not believe there can be any great tribulation until the majority of Jews know God through Christ. The tribulation saints are Jewish, and it will be the fact that God is again dealing with them that will cause Gentile hatred to turn upon them as never before.

## Genesis 6:3

**QUESTION:** I will appreciate a better translation of Genesis 6:3. The *King James Version* seems to be very confusing.

**ANSWER:** The Companion Bible offers excellent help on this, and from it I work out the following paraphrase. My spirit (the breath of life) shall not always remain in the man Adam, for he is also flesh (that is, a man in this world subject to death) yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years. As long as Adam was upon the earth he was the oldest man alive. The order in which men came upon the earth was not followed in their passing. Because Adam continued to live when many others died, it may have been that a report was current that he was different from other men and would never die. In this verse God repeats the sentence first pronounced in Eden, but declares that Adam would live one hundred twenty years more.

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## *THE EDITOR TO HIS FRIENDS*

\*\*\*\*The new pamphlet offered in this issue *Acts 28:28 - A Dispensational Boundary Line* presents the very heart of my message so far as dispensational truth is concerned. The first paragraph reads as follows: "This pamphlet does not have to do with religion or religious systems. It is a treatise related to the interpretation, understanding and appreciation of the Word of God. It does not deal with service for God. It deals with the truth of God. The writer sincerely believes that the truth presented in this study is a key that unlocks much of the New Testament. Experience has demonstrated to him that the recognition of Paul's declaration in Acts 28:28 as a dispensational dividing line will provide answers to Biblical questions that have long seemed unanswerable, solutions to problems that have seemed insoluble, that it will clear away what heretofore have been insuperable difficulties, and provide honest explanations of contradictions that have puzzled students of Scripture down through the centuries. An ever deepening conviction has come to him that full acceptance of the principle of interpretation set forth in these pages will permit the student of the Word of God to feel assured that he has fully obeyed the divine command set forth by Paul to Timothy: 'Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.' Furthermore it is his conviction that the full acceptance of this principle by a sufficient number of faithful men would bring about a sorely needed revival of interest in the Word of God, opening up as it does new avenues of Bible study into truths of Scripture which have baffled many who have tried to explore them."

\*\*\*\*I believe that the pamphlet on Acts 28:28 will be of help to everyone who is interested in the Word of God. It will be of no help to anyone who does not read the Bible, or who has no interest in the Sacred Scriptures. It should not be sent to anyone who is not interested in the Truth, but it should be placed in the hands of all who do have a love of God's Word. We will be glad to send these out to any names you may send in, or you may mail them yourself if you prefer to do so. The price will be the same either way - twenty-five cents per copy (2003 ed. - - and milk was 40 cents/qt.).

\*\*\*\*The *Acts* 28:28 pamphlet is 36 pages in length. The one on *Grace* was 24. We had paper on hand for the one on *Grace*, but had to buy a new supply for the one on *Acts* 28:28. At first it appeared that the one on *Acts* 28:28 would have to sell for thirty-five cents a single copy, but due to the liberal gift of a devoted friend of this ministry a free copy is offered to every reader of *The Word of Truth* and the price for additional copies is held down to twenty-five cents.

\*\*\*\* Six thousand copies of the book on *Grace* were published and seven thousand of the one on *Acts* 28:28. When the one on *How God Redeems a Soul* is printed, I would like to print ten thousand copies, be able to offer a free copy to every reader, and sell additional copies for distribution at a very low price. Anyone interested in this project may correspond with me about it. Do not order copies of this book until it is announced as being ready.

\*\*\*\*This issue completes Volume 9. An index to this volume is provided on the last pages. It is our plan to provide a complete index to the first ten volumes at the end of Volume 10. This will list every subject and Scripture that has been dealt with in the first ten volumes of this magazine.

\*\*\*\*One thousand copies of each issue of Volume 9 have been reserved for binding. A like number of Volume 7 and 8 are also waiting to be bound. We are still unable to secure binding cloth of the same quality and color that was used in the first six Volumes. We have been offered recently a very cheap binding cloth, black in color, but refused it because of our desire to keep the Volumes uniform in color and binding. We were also offered some very fine cloth, quite expensive, but turned this down for the same reasons. Some of our readers have had their own copies bound, and have experienced no trouble whatsoever in getting them done. This has caused them to wonder why we are having such difficulty. We would have no trouble at all getting a few copies bound if we accepted whatever cloth was offered and paid four times as much as we pay in large quantities. We now have 3,000 copies awaiting binding and desire them to be in the same color and quality of cloth as was used in the first six Volumes. This cloth is not now available, but the manufacturers say it will be in the near future.

\*\*\*\*I regret that the appeal for funds for publishing *The Word of Truth* had to go out with the same issue as the free offer of the book on *Acts* 28:28. Some uncharitable person may be inclined to think the book is offered free but a gift is expected in return. This is not true. I had hoped to be able to offer the book on *Acts* 28:28 in the previous issue but it was not ready. Now that it is ready, I do not want to hold it back until a later issue, 'and since funds are needed for the magazine the appeal for them must go forth with this issue. I trust that this will not deter anyone from sending in their request for this book, even though they may not be able to make a gift or do not feel led to make one at this time.

\*\*\*\*The Conference in Los Angeles brought great joy to our hearts. It was a blessed experience. The services were well attended from the first meeting and there was good interest in the studies presented. It was a joy to see old friends and make new ones. Mrs. Sellers joins me in expressing our thanks to all in Southern California who helped to make our visit such an enjoyable interlude in our already happy lives.

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