

# Limited Atonement?

By Dr. John Hobbs

The third cardinal doctrine in Calvinistic Theology is the doctrine of "Limited Atonement." It is the "L" in the T-U-L-I-P acrostic. Most Calvinists prefer the term "Particular Atonement" or "Definite Atonement."

## What Calvinists Believe About Limited Atonement

*The Canons of Dort, article 8, states, 'It was the will of God that Christ by the blood of the cross, whereby He confirmed the new covenant, should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, all those, and only those, who were from eternity chosen to salvation.'*

*Henry Fish, a Baptist wrote in 1850, 'Did the atonement, in its saving design, embrace more than the elect? The elect only; for whatever he designed he will accomplish, and he saves only his people from their sins.'*

*David Steele and Curtis Thomas wrote, 'But He came into the world to represent and save only those given Him by the Father. Thus Christ's work was limited in that it was designed to save some and not others.'*

*WJ. Seaton said, 'Christ died to save a particular number of sinners.'*

*Lorraine Boettner said, 'The value of the atonement depends upon, and is measured by, the dignity of the person making it; and since Christ suffered as a Divine-human person the value of His suffering was infinite ... The atonement, therefore, was infinitely meritorious and might have saved every member of the human race had that been God's plan.'*

*Ralph Gore wrote, "Christ died for the elect. The extent of the atonement is identical with the intent of divine election."*

*Paul Enns wrote, 'If God is sovereign (Eph. 1:11) then His plan cannot be frustrated, but if Christ died for all people and all people are not saved then God's plan is frustrated.'*

*R. B. Kuiper said, 'God purposed by the atonement to save only the elect and that consequently all the elect, and they alone, will be saved.'*

The question may be put this way: When Christ died on the cross, did he pay for the sins of the entire human race or only for the sins of those who he knew would ultimately be saved? Calvinists would answer the latter group.

*Wayne Grudem wrote: The term that is usually preferred is particular redemption, since this view holds that Christ died for particular people (specifically, those who would be saved and whom he came to redeem), that he foreknew each one of them individually (cf. Eph. 1:3-5) and had them individually in mind in his atoning work.*

## **The Foundational Basis for Limited Atonement**

The doctrine of Limited Atonement is based on the concept of double jeopardy (trying a person twice for the same crime). The argument goes like this: If Jesus died for the sins of all men, then the sins of all men are paid for and one has already been judged for those sins. On the Day of Judgment, if God would bring a man into judgment and commit him to hell even though Jesus had already paid for his sins, God would be

putting that person in double jeopardy. God would be unjust – something he is not (Deut. 32:4).

The argument is: Since we do not permit double jeopardy in our own legal system, surely we would not expect God to do something we would not do.

Calvinists argue therefore – Jesus actually died only for the sins of the elect, the chosen, the saved.

However, just because there is an analogy from a human viewpoint, this does not prove that it coincides with the truth of God's word.

Isaiah 55:8-9 states, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Proverbs 14:12 states, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death." We are warned: "Lean not upon thine own understanding" (Prov. 3:5).

We do not formulate doctrine by analogies or examples. They may illustrate doctrine, but they do not prove doctrine. We must determine truth from the Word of God and not human reasoning. There are some great truths of scripture which are beyond our comprehension and we accept because the Bible teaches them (such as, the Trinity, God's love, nature of sin, and such like), and therefore are not proved by reason, but are known by revelation.

## **Scriptures Used by Calvinists to Support Limited Atonement**

*Matthew 1:21 states, "For it is he that shall save his people from their sins."*

*Jesus "loved the church and gave himself up for it" (Eph.*

5:25).

*Romans 4:25 reads, "Who was delivered up for our trespasses."*

*Romans 5:8 says, "But God commendeth his own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."*

*Romans 5:10 reveals, "We were reconciled to God through the death of his Son."*

*Romans 8:32 declares, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all."*

*Acts 20:28 states, "To feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood."*

*In John 10:15 Jesus said, "I lay down my life for the sheep."*

*2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "Him who knew no sin he made to be [a] sin [offering] on our behalf."*

*Galatians 1:4 says, "Who gave himself for our sins."*

*Ephesians 1:7 says, "In whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses."*

*Titus 2:14 states, "Who gave himself for us."*

Calvinists use the above Scriptures as proof texts that Christ died "only" for the elect.

Christ died for his people. That is the main point of these verses! However the Bible does not teach Limited Atonement – that Christ died "only" for the elect, "only" for a limited class.

Calvinists "twist" and "pervert" other plain Scriptures that clearly teach that Christ died for all men. They do so unto their own destruction (2 Pet. 3:15-17). When we come to the Bible, we must take all of it to arrive at total-saving truth.

Psalms 119:160 states, "The sum of all thy word is truth." Matthew 4:4 says, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." It takes all of Scripture for the man of God to be complete (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We must preach "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).

Christ died for all men. Christians appreciate the fact that Christ died for them. The verses used by Calvinists emphasize that point. Unbelievers do not appreciate that fact and therefore do nothing about it.

## A True Story Concerning Hebrews 2:9

In 1980, I took second year New Testament Greek through Wheaton College at the Summer Institute of Linguistics in Dallas, Texas. My professor was Dr. John Werner, an outstanding world-recognized Greek scholar. But, he was a Calvinist through and through. One day we were reading the book of Hebrews in class. When it came my time to read, I was to translate Hebrews 2:9. I translated the verse, "But we behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God he should taste of death *only for the elect*."

My professor and the class laughed. After the laughter subsided, I added, "Excuse me – that should be – for every man."

Brethren, if the grammar makes sense, anything else is nonsense. To deny that Jesus tasted of death "for every man" is to deny the plain and clear teaching of Scripture! Dr. Werner agreed that the verse should be translated "for every man." But, he denied that is what it meant. He believed that it meant "every redeemed man" even though that is not what the text says!

We should not base biblical doctrine on “feeling” or “thinking.” Biblical doctrine is based on God’s Word!

If the Holy Spirit wanted to say that Christ died only for the elect, he could have easily done so. But, he did not do so. There is no “specific” passage in the entire Bible that teaches Limited Atonement.

Wayne Grudem, a Calvinist, says, “Hebrews 2:9 is best understood to refer to every one of Christ’s people, every one who is redeemed.”

Grudem is reading the Bible with his rose colored glasses on and sees what he wants to see instead of what is really there! The text does not say that Christ tasted of death for every “redeemed” man. Grudem is reading into the text something that is not there. This is something that God’s Word explicitly forbids (Rev. 22:18-19; 1 Cor. 4:6; Gal. 1:8-9; 3:15; 2 John 9-11; Matt. 4:4; Prov. 30:5-6; Deut. 4:2; 12:32).

The words *every man* in Hebrews 2:9 are translated from the Greek word *pantos* (in form it is a genitive masculine or neuter singular word from the adjective *pas, pasa, pan* meaning “all” or “every”).

Bruce says:

*So far as the form goes, pantos might be masculine (“everyone”) or neuter (“everything”); but since our author’s concern is with Christ’s work for humanity, and not with cosmic implications of His work, it is more probable to be taken as masculine.*

Alford says, “The singular brings out, far more strongly than the plural would, the applicability of Christ’s death to each individual man.” Jesus died for each individual person (which equals all mankind). The singular *pantos* emphasizes his care and love and concern for every human being!

This fact is a strong factor for each individual person to give his life back to him and live a holy God-fearing life (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

This same Greek word, *pantos*, is found in Matthew 13:19 and is translated “when any one.” It is obvious in Matthew 13:19 that the Greek word refers only to lost human beings.

It is interesting that the Greek New Testament uses the word *pantos* at least once specifically to refer “only” to condemned human beings. Calvinists say that the word *pantos* in Hebrews 2:9 refers “only” to saved “redeemed” people. If the word *pantos* in Matthew 13:19 refers only to lost people who will spend eternity in hell, does that mean that in Hebrews 2:9 that the same group is being considered? No!

Can the word *pantos* refer to all mankind including those who appreciate Christ’s death for them? Of course! Christ “tasted of death for every man.” It is important to understand that the meaning of *pantos* will have to be determined by the context. Therefore, we can conclude that in Hebrews 2:9, the Greek word *pantos* refers to all humans period – not just the saved, not just God’s special people. Jesus died for all humans – those who are lost and those who are going to heaven. Calvinists deny the plain teaching of God’s Word and add to it when they say Jesus tasted of death for every “redeemed” man.

## **An Examination of God’s Word and Limited Atonement**

The Bible is very clear that Jesus died for the sins of “all men” and not just for “the elect.”

Consider these passages as to who Jesus died for:

1. John 1:29: “the one that taketh away the sin of the world” – i.e. all mankind

2. John 3:16: "the world" – i.e. all mankind
3. John 4:42: "This is indeed the Saviour of the world" – i.e. all mankind
4. John 12:47: "I came ... to save the world" – i.e. all mankind
5. Romans 5:6: "Christ died for the ungodly"
6. Romans 5:8: "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"
7. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15: "he died for all"
8. 2 Corinthians 5:19: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" – i.e. all mankind. Those who believe in Limited Atonement say this refers to "the world of the elect." Again, they are adding to the Word of God.
9. 1 Timothy 1:15: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"
10. Timothy 2:6: "Who gave himself a ransom for all"
11. 1 Timothy 4:10: "Who is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe"
12. Titus 2:11: "bringing salvation to all men"
13. Hebrews 2:9: "He should taste of death for every man."
14. 2 Peter 2:1: "Denying the Master that bought them" – Christ provided redemption for the false prophets but they refused to accept it.
15. 1 John 2:2: "And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." – i.e. all mankind
16. 1 John 4:14 "The Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" – i.e. all mankind

## A Study of 1 John 2:2

One passage that must be the focus of our attention is 1 John 2:2. Here John wrote, "And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world."



Vine defines “propitiation” as “a means whereby sin is covered and remitted.” The text is very clear that sin covering has been provided “for our sins” – that is, Christians’ and “for the whole world,” or all humanity. If there was ever a verse in the Bible that taught the possibility of unlimited salvation – this is it!

Brown says that the word “world” is the “sphere of human beings and of human experience.” The apostle John uses the word “world” several times to refer to all humanity (John 1:29; 3:16-17; 4:42; 12:46-47; 1 John 4:14).

It is sad that some people “twist” the scriptures from their true meaning (2 Pet. 3:15-17). The same basis for forgiving one man’s sins is also the same basis for forgiving the sins of all men – the death of Christ.

It is not implied or taught that sins are forgiven unconditionally. The Bible does not teach the doctrine of Universalism, i.e. all men will be saved. The Bible does teach that only those who appropriate the blood of Christ over their sins will be saved (Rom. 6:3-4, 17-18; 1 Pet. 1:22; Rev. 2:10; 7:14).

*Wayne Grudem, a Calvinist, writes, “The preposition ‘for’ [in 1 John 2:2] is ambiguous with respect to the specific sense in which Christ is the propitiation “for” the sins of the world.*

*The Greek word translated “for” in this verse is peri, and means ‘concerning’ or ‘with respect to.’ It does not define the way in which Christ is the sacrifice with respect to the sins of the world.*

*It is consistent with the language of the verse to say that John is simply saying that Christ is the sacrifice available to pay for the sins of anyone and everyone in the world.”*

There are several problems with Grudem's twisting of Scripture:

(1) Grudem does not deal with the word *world* in his defense of Calvinism. It is obvious that John uses the word "world" in the verse and in the other verses cited to refer to all humanity. Jesus died for all mankind.

(2) It is true that the word *for* in the phrase *for the whole world* is the Greek word *peri*. I agree that it means "concerning" or "with respect to."

Robertson says that *pen* has a sense similar to *hyper* in the verse. The word *hyper* means "in behalf of." It must be pointed out that the word *for* in the phrases *for our sins* and *not for ours only* in 1 John 2:2 is translated from the Greek word *peri*.

The Holy Spirit inspired John to use the Greek word *peri* three times in 1 John 2:2. This word is sufficient to define the way Christ is the sacrifice "for our sins" but not "for the sins of the whole world."

Grudem says that the preposition *peri* "is ambiguous." He is straining the gnat and swallowing the camel in order to avoid accepting the clear truth. Grudem would say that its third use in the verse is ambiguous but not its first and second uses.

The emphasis in the verse is on Christ's "propitiation" – not the preposition "for."

John says Christ's propitiation is "for our sins" and "not for ours only" but also "for the sins of the whole world."

## **A Study of 1 Timothy 4:10**

Paul wrote, "For to this end we labor and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of them that believe."

This verse is important to the discussion. Here the apostle clearly states the salvation of all men. He does not teach Universalism. But, he does teach that salvation has been provided for all men, i.e. all humanity. However, that salvation is appropriated and appreciated by those who believe. All men are potentially saved by Christ's death, but only those who appropriate the blood of Christ over their sins will be saved.

Grudem says:

*He [Jesus] is referring to God the Father, not to Christ, and probably uses the word 'Savior' in the sense of 'one who preserves people's lives and rescues them from danger' rather than the sense of 'one who forgives their sins,' for surely Paul does not mean that every single person will be saved.*

Grudem misses it again.

(1) No, Paul is not teaching that every single person will be saved. No New Testament writer ever taught that.

(2) There is no problem with taking the word *Savior* as referring to God the Father. He is the Savior of all men in that He sent Jesus to die for all men (John 3:16; 1 John 4:10). The Father and the Son are one in purpose, aim, plan, and design (John 10:30).

(3) For Grudem to say that the word *Savior* does not refer to "sins" shows his theological bias. In Matthew 1:21, the child is to be called Jesus. Why? Because he will save his people from their "sins." The word "Jesus" means "Savior." Grudem does not want 1 Timothy 4:10 to refer to "sins," so he denies it.

(4) God desires "all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). Jesus "gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:6). Salvation for "all men" has been

provided (1 Tim. 4:10). However, this salvation is “specially” for those who “believe.” This word does not imply that all will be saved. The Greek word *malista* translated “specially” is also translated “particularly” or “especially” in 1 Timothy 5:17 and “above all” or “especially” in 2 Timothy 4:13. Paul is saying that God is potentially the Savior of all men. For the individuals who “will” to come to the Lord, these individuals “will in no wise be cast out” (John 5:40; 6:37).

J.W. Roberts wrote, “He is the savior (potentially) of all men, but especially (or actually) of believers.”

Dr. J. C. Davis states, “God is the potential Savior of all men (John 3:16; Rom. 10:13; 2 Pet. 3:9). God is the actual Savior of believers” (Heb. 5:8-9; 2 Thess. 1:8; Rev. 2:10).

J. N. D. Kelly wrote, “Paul is no doubt giving expression to his conviction that the certainty of salvation belongs in an especial degree to those who have accepted Christ.” True!

1 Timothy 4:10 is like Galatians 6:10. Christians are to “work that which is good toward all men and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith.” We have an obligation to do “good toward all men” (even the ones who have not named the name of Christ). But, we have a special obligation to help those who are Christians. Christ died for all men but especially for those who believe.

## **An Invitation Is Given to All Men**

In Matthew 11:25, Jesus said, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” The church, the bride as it is called, and the Holy Spirit perpetuate that invitation as shown by John in Revelation 22:17:

*And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.*

The invitation is given to all men. Why offer salvation to all if that is not possible? The text says “whosoever” will.

## God Desires All Men to Be Saved

In (2 Peter 3:9) we read:

*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

God wants “all” to come to repentance! Boettner, a Calvinist, denies that it is God’s plan for all to be saved. Seaton, a Calvinist, asks, “The over-riding question must always be the Divine intention; did God intend to save all men, or did He not?”

The fact that God desires that “all” should come to repentance implies that God has provided provisions for “all.” Christ died for all men. This verse teaches that if a man is lost, it is against God’s will because he wants “all” to come to repentance and be saved.

In 1 Timothy 2:4, Paul wrote, “Who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.” Here again God’s Word is clear. God desires that all men be saved.

In (Ezekiel 33:11) we read:

*As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*

God desires that the wicked turn from his evil ways and live. God does not want or wish that any person be lost.

Paul Enns, a Calvinist, wrote, “If God is sovereign then His

plan cannot be frustrated, but if Christ died for all people and all people are not saved, then God's plan is frustrated."

God is sovereign, but his plan involves the free will of man. His plan is that those who by their free will elect to believe and become obedient will be saved.

God is "frustrated" or "grieved" when men do not respond to his saving grace (Gen. 6:5-6; Mark 3:5; Luke 19:41; Eph. 4:30).

God's desire and will is frustrated when men are lost. God wants "all" to come to repentance and "all men" to be saved. He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 33:11). "God is not willing that any should perish" (2 Pet. 3:9).

But, some will perish – not because Jesus did not die for them. He died for each individual person to show his intense love. If an individual is lost, it is because he has rejected God's intense love. God does not desire it that way. But, he respects the right of a person to make his own decision.

## **Pardon for Sins Can Be Rejected**

It is possible for pardon and salvation to be offered and rejected. In 1829 two men, Wilson and Porter, were apprehended in the state of Pennsylvania for robbing the United States mail. They were indicted, convicted, and sentenced to death by hanging. Three weeks before the scheduled execution, President Andrew Jackson pardoned one of the men, George Wilson. This was followed by a strange decision. George Wilson refused the pardon! He was hung because he rejected the pardon.

Today, God has provided eternal salvation and pardon for all men. He has accomplished this by sending his one-of-a-kind Son to die for the sins of each and every individual person. However, this salvation can be refused.

If one chooses not to appropriate the blood of Christ over his

sins initially and continually, he is refusing and rejecting the salvation which has been provided for him by God Almighty. While we can recognize the foolishness of such a decision, we must be aware of the fact that the majority of mankind will refuse their pardon (Matt. 7:13-14; Luke 13:23-24). How sad!

## Why Did God Create Man?

A lady asked me, "Why did God create man if he knew so many would be lost?"

This is a thought-provoking question. I answer this with two thoughts:

(1) Whatever God does is right and just. We may not understand what he does but that is because we are human and finite while he is divine and infinite (Isa. 55:8-9). Deuteronomy 32:4 states, "For all his ways are justice: A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is he." God himself asked Job, "Wilt thou even annul my judgment? Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be justified?" Job attacked and condemned the present righteousness of God. Job sinned by doing this. Job later repented Job 40:35; 42:1-6).

(2) I think the answer to this tough question is that God respects our free moral agency. If a man is lost, it will be his fault – not God's! God has done everything possible for the salvation of each person. God will not overtake one's will and force him to obey. Life is what we make it! We can avail ourselves of God's love or we can spurn it and reject it. The choice is ours (Deut. 30:11-15; Joshua 24:15; Acts 2:37, 40).

Seaton, a Calvinist, said, "If it was God's intention to save the entire world, then the atonement of Christ has been a great failure, for vast numbers of mankind have not been saved."

Seaton misses it. Christ's death was not a failure. The

failure is man's free moral will. Man by his own free will chooses not to obey. Christ is "the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:9; cf. John 3:36; Rom. 6:17-18; 2 Thess. 1:8; 1 Pet. 4:17).

On the Day of Judgment if a person is cast into the Lake of Fire for all eternity, it will be his own failure – not God's! The failure lies with man not with God.

Calvinists say they focus on God's sovereignty while we focus on man's free will. I say it is not an either/or situation; it is a both/and situation. Both of these concepts are respected in the scriptures. We must accept both.

## Conclusion

To deny the Bible teaching that Christ died for all is to make God a respecter of persons – unjust and unmerciful. The doctrine of limited atonement is false. All men are potentially saved. If a person refuses pardon, death is not the fault of the one who offered mercy, but of the one who refused to accept it.

*(Editor's Note: The word atonement means to cover or conceal. It is an Old Testament word and is not found in the New Testament. The sins of people before the cross could be atoned, but after the cross the sins of the obedient believer were forgiven. There is a dramatic difference. Under Moses there was a remembrance made of atoned sins year by year [Heb. 10:3 – the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sins]. The blood of animals could cause God to overlook sins while remembering them year by year, but could not remove the sins. This was atonement. The blood of the Lamb of God is able not to merely cover or bypass sins, but to remove every transgression and disobedience. To receive the forgiveness available in the blood of the cross, one must obey [Heb. 5:7-8].)*



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# Holy Spirit in the New Testament

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## ▪ I. Introduction

- A. The writers of the Old Testament looked for a time when the Holy Spirit would do a greater work than was done in their day.
- B. They stressed the importance of words that would be spoken and written because of the work of the Holy Spirit. Consider the importance of the words of revelation.
  - 1. “The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me; because Jehovah hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the year of Jehovah’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them a garland for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of Jehovah, that he may be glorified” (Isa. 61:1-3).
  - 2. The context of this passage shows these words were spoken to Judah before the Babylonian captivity and refer to the

restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple but have a second and ultimate fulfillment in Jesus (See Luke 4:16-21). The message was from "the Spirit of the Lord Jehovah."

- C. The power and importance of the revealed word is emphasized. The word heard, revealed, preached, believed and obeyed is dominant.
  - 1. Matthew 4:12-17 and Isaiah 9:1-2— Jesus began to preach.
  - 2. Matthew 11:2-6; Isaiah 35:5-10—gospel is preached.
  - 3. Matthew 12:15-21 and Isaiah 42:1-4—Jehovah's servant shall declare judgment.
  - 4. Matthew 13:14-17 and Isaiah 6:9-10— see, hear, believe.
  - 5. Matthew 13:35 and Psalms 78:1-3— teach and reveal.
  - 6. Luke 4:16-21 and Isaiah 61:1-3—preach good tidings.
  - 7. John 12:37-41 and Isaiah 53:1; Isaiah 6:9-10—a message is to be believed.
- D. The Bible deals with the message more than the messenger. The real messenger was the Holy Spirit, and, being God, he is deep, inscrutable, and incomprehensible, but we can grasp the words the Holy Spirit revealed.
- II. The Holy Spirit and the Word in the New Testament
  - A. John the Baptist was a forerunner.
    - 1. He was filled with the Holy Spirit from birth (Luke 1:15).
    - 2. He was to prepare the way for Messiah (Isaiah 40:3).
    - 3. He would turn the hearts of the people to God (Malachi 4:5-6).
    - 4. He did his work by exhortation and preaching (Luke 3:18)

- B. The work of Jesus was planned by God.
  - 1. "He that hath received his witness hath set his seal to this, that God is true. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for he giveth not the Spirit by measure. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:34-36).
    - a) Note: Jesus is the one God sent. Jesus spoke the words of God: for (the reason is) he (God) giveth not the Spirit by measure. Obviously, the one who spoke the words of God, is the one who received the Spirit without measure—Jesus received the spirit without measure.
    - b) Others must have received the Spirit by measure; otherwise it does not make sense to say Jesus had an immeasurable measure of the Spirit.
  - 2. Emphasis was put on the teaching (the words) of Jesus: "Never man so spake" (John 7:46).
    - a) "The multitudes were astonished at his teaching" (Matt. 7:28).
    - b) "Hear ye him" (Matt. 17:5).
    - c) "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46).
    - d) "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that y,

Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock" (Matt. 7:21-24).

- e) "It is the spirit that giveth life; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63).
- f) "No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he that is from God, he hath seen the Father" (John 6:44-46).
- g) "Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I came forth and am come from God; for neither have I come of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and standeth not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie,

he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof. But because I say the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convicteth me of sin? If I say truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth the words of God: for this cause ye hear them not, because ye are not of God" (John 8:42-47)

- h) "If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also: from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth his works" (John 14:7-10; Amos 1:1). Daniel said, 'heard I the voice of his words" (Dan. 10:9). Balaam said, ' 'The word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak" (Num. 22:38).

## Comments on the Outline

God instructs the people of earth through the medium of words. The Holy Spirit used words in instructing chosen leaders who repeated the words to the public. The words would sometimes come to the receiver through the eye, at other times through the ear, and occasionally the words were put in the mouth, but the message always came in the signs and symbols of ideas and

was communicated to the people in words.

"The words of Amos, who was among the herdsmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel...." (Amos 1:1). Daniel said, "heard I the voice of his words" (Dan.10:9). Balaam said, "The word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak" (Num. 22:38).

The Bible stresses the importance of inspired writings. The New Testament says the Holy Spirit influences human minds through a medium, except in some miracles—*miracles confined to the first century*.

God made the world by the creative power of his spoken word. God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters." God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together unto one place." God said, "Let the earth put forth grass, herbs yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit after their kind, wherein is the seed thereof, upon the earth: and it was so." God spoke, and it was done. "By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God" (Heb. 11:3).

"... It is God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). Paul's argument is that the same God who called light out of darkness in the beginning, demonstrated how weighty and mighty his word is, by giving the revelation of his gospel of salvation. We dare not ignore nor belittle it.

The force of God's word is well documented in the Bible. The gospel is God's power to save (Rom. 1:16). Still, some misguided souls call it "the mere word" and "the dead letter." Those who faithfully follow the teaching of the Bible are called strict constructionists and legalists. These terms are used in derision and are not unlike the Jews' calling Jesus a Samaritan to disgrace him. Jesus set the proper response

pattern for us when he discounted their slap by saying they dishonored him and pointed out that he was doing his Father's will, but they were not so disposed. The apostle argues we do not handle the word of God deceitfully. ..The gods of this world blind the minds of the unbelieving to prevent them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ...We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God" (2 Cor. 4:1-7). He calls the scriptures "the word of God...the gospel of the glory of Christ...a treasure...an exceeding great power."

We do not war according to the flesh, but "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ; and being in readiness to avenge all disobedience, when your obedience shall be made full" (2 Cor. 10:5-6).

Our obedience is to be full, complete, perfect. It is the Comforter—the Holy Spirit—who gives to us divine revelation. "Wherefore, even as the Holy Spirit saith, Today if ye shall hear his voice" (Heb. 3:7). "Brethren, it was needful that the scripture should be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spake before by the mouth of David concerning Judas" (Acts 1:16). "The Spirit of Jehovah spake by me, And his word was upon my tongue" (2 Sam. 23:2). "But the Spirit saith expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1).

The word of truth revealed by the Holy Spirit is sufficient and adequate to make sinners acceptable to God. We are not to follow the ambiguous leadings of doubtful feelings but are to submit to the absolute standard of scripture inspired of God.

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4).

“Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth” (Matt. 6:10).

“The law of Jehovah is perfect, restoring the soul: The testimony of Jehovah is sure, making wise the simple” (Psalms 19:7).

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope” (Rom. 15:4).

“And that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness. That the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work” (2 Tim. 3:15-17)

“It is the spirit that giveth life; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, are life” (John 6:63).

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death” (Rom. 8:2).

“But he that looketh into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing” (James 1:25).

“For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12).

“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves” (James 1:22).

“Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures”



(James 1:18).

“Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently: having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever, For, all flesh is as grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower falleth: But the word of the Lord abideth for ever. And this is the word of good tidings which was preached unto you” (1 Peter 1:22-25).

“For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God’s good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor. 1:21).

“Wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21).

John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth finished their God-given assignments through the power of words. The overriding importance of the message is prominent in the God-given scriptures (writings). As we look at the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the apostles of Jesus, certain disciples in the first century, and all the saved, we will understand more fully the Spirit’s work of revealing, confirming, and protecting the plan of salvation as given in the new covenant.

“Now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give {you} the inheritance among all them that are sanctified” (Acts 20:32).

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# Miracles of the Bible

*By H. A. (Buster) Dobbs*

The idea of a miracle holds fascination for many people because it is charged with enigma. Strange and unknown things somehow appeal to the human psyche. Everybody talks about miracles but few know what they are talking about. The first step in discussing miracles is to say what we are talking about and note what we are not talking about. The purpose of this study is to consider the miracles of the Bible. We are not surveying unusual events in the human experience that some wrongly call miracles and that have no connection with the Word of God. Things like Unidentified Flying Objects and little green men with antennae coming out of their heads and long, snake-like fingers, and squeaky voices are figment and not miracle. Neither are we discussing the magician's tricks. Furthermore, not every strange thing that is difficult to explain is a miracle.

The word "miracle" in the New Testament translates two Greek words. These two words are variously translated "miracle, sign, token, wonder, ability, power, might, strength, violence, and virtue." The King James translators use the word 37 times. The American Standard translators use the word only 9 times. Often where the King James translates "miracle" the American Standard uses the word "sign." A miracle is a sign, but not every sign is a miracle.

The New Testament speaks of signs or miracles performed by agency of the devil. In warning of a coming apostasy, Paul wrote: Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him; to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is just at hand; let no man beguile you in any wise: for it will not be, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the

son of perdition, he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know that which restraineth, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season. For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of his coming; even he, whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie (2 Thess. 2:1-11). The lawless one would come with the power of Satan to perform signs and lying wonders. In the book of Revelation the miraculous power of evil spirits is mentioned. "And he doeth great signs (miracles), that he should even make fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight of men" (Rev 13:13).

"And he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs (miracles) which it was given him to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast who hath the stroke of the sword and lived" (Rev. 13:14). "For they are spirits of demons, working signs (miracles); which go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God, the Almighty" (Rev. 16:14). "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought the signs (miracles) in his sight, wherewith he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast and them that worshipped his image: they two were cast alive into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone" (Rev. 19:20). Malignant spirits, under the control of the great Red Dragon, were able

to perform wonders and signs to deceive people and bring them under the power of the Prince of Darkness. When the empire of Satan is utterly crushed by the heavenly army of the Captain of our salvation, these wonder working spirits will be cast into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.

In the book of Acts we are told of a pretender to magic powers who amazed the people with his sorcery. "But there was a certain man, Simon by name, who beforetime in the city used sorcery, and amazed the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is that power of God which is called Great. And they gave heed to him, because that of long time he had amazed them with his sorceries" (Acts 8:8-11). Simon of Samaria was a charlatan, but the people were fooled. His humbug was effective. He was a fraud, but the people didn't know it. The great and the small in the city of Samaria thought Simon was the real thing. They jumped on his bandwagon.

This Samaritan, Simon, was a conscious agent for Satan, and knew he was using trickery to deceive the people. Every generation produces swindlers who exploit gullible people eager to believe in voodooism. It is strange that people would rather accept claptrap than truth. The kind of signs these people do cannot favorably compare with bona fide miracles. Philip, a preacher of righteousness, came to Samaria and when the people of Samaria "heard and saw" the signs which he did they knew they had been bamboozled by Simon.

"And the multitudes gave heed with one accord unto the things that were spoken by Philip, when they heard, and saw the signs which he did. For from many of those that had unclean spirits, they came out, crying with a loud voice: and many that were palsied, and that were lame, were healed. And there was much joy in that city" (Acts 8:6-8).

Satan has real power and can pull wool over the eyes of

sincere folks. We need to be alert to this and not allow ourselves to be hoodwinked by quacks. To be guided by astrology, Tarot cards, alchemy, palm readers, and fortune-tellers is about as sensible as making life-changing decisions on the basis of a message found in a Chinese after-dinner-cookie.

In the first century, the devil was allowed to use his mystical power without limit. The wonder-working power of God was also fully unleashed. There was a great contest. The supernatural power of God was arrayed against the supernatural power of the devil. The devil lost! Demon possession of Bible times was a display of Satan's power. In the case of the woman with the "spirit of infirmity," we are told that Satan had bound her for eighteen years (Luke 13:16). The maid with "a spirit of divination" was a tool of evil spirits (Acts 16:16-18). Every time demons came into contact with one having the supernatural power of God, the demon lost. In each case, the demon was cast out. In one case, demons were sent into a herd of swine (Matt. 8:31-32). They could not predominate in the presence of divine omnipotence.

Satan was defeated. Jesus' victory over death was the final blow. Evil was pulverized. The terms of surrender were dictated by the conquering Christ. He who used his power to bind many was himself bound. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, And gave gifts unto men" (Eph. 4:8). "And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and cast him into the abyss, and shut it, and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be finished: after this he must be loosed for a little time" (Rev. 20:2-3). The vanquished Satan will never again be allowed to use his supernatural power to afflict humanity. God also restricts his power to natural means by his own choice. We have the sweet assurance that "there hath no temptation taken you but such as

man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it" (1 Cor. 10:13).

Having looked at fake miracles and having considered Satanic signs, we now consider the miracles performed by the power of God that are recorded in the New Testament. A study of supernatural acts executed by divine power will demonstrate the nature of miracles performed in the name of God. There are several conditions that determine what constitutes a miracle performed by the power of the Creator. First, the heavenly miracles of the first century were always successful. No applicant for miraculous healing in the days of Jesus and the apostles ever went away disappointed. And the report of him went forth into all Syria: and they brought unto him all that were sick, holden with divers diseases and torments, possessed with demons, and epileptic, and palsied; and he healed them (Matt. 4:24). "And when even was come, they brought unto him many possessed with demons: and he cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all that were sick" (Matt. 8:16). "And Jesus perceiving it withdrew from thence: and many followed him; and he healed them all" (Matt. 12:15). "And he came forth, and saw a great multitude, and he had compassion on them, and healed their sick" (Matt. 14:14). "And there came unto him great multitudes, having with them the lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and they cast them down at his feet; and he healed them" (Matt. 15:30). "And when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them" (Luke 4:40).

There were no failures! No one ever went away from a "healing service" of Jesus or the apostles still sick, possessed, or bound. We are told of an epileptic the disciples of Jesus could not heal, but the Lord healed him (Matt. 17:15-18). There was no failure in this situation. Jesus, we are told,

“did not many mighty works” in Nazareth (Matt. 13:58). The reason he did not do many miracles in his hometown was not that he could not do it, but the people did not believe him and therefore did not come to him for healing. He was not going to break their doors down to demonstrate his divine credentials. If a person wants to reject Jesus, he is allowed to do it. This, obviously, does not constitute failure, but lack of opportunity.

There never was a failure. So, the first thing we learn is that God-authorized miracles never fail. No sufferer who applied to Jesus or his disciples for healing was told that his lack of faith caused the cure not to materialize. Second, the cure was always perfect. No person was ever partially cured. If God heals supernaturally, the cure must be complete, or the power of God is inadequate. It is true that on one occasion at Bethsaida a blind man was brought to Jesus with a request that he be healed (Mark 8:22). Jesus “spit on his eyes” and said “Seest thou aught” (Mark 8:23). The man answered, “I see men, for I behold them as trees, walking” (Mark 8:24). Jesus laid his hands upon the man and he “saw all things clearly” (Mark 8:25). Why Jesus healed this man in stages I do not know, but it is true that the blind man never left the presence of Jesus until he “saw all things clearly.” In supernatural healing there is never a period of recuperation. The sick person does not begin to get better and over a period of weeks or months or years finally recover health. Miracles of healing always take place instantly. Third, there was no relapse. There is not a single instance in all of the New Testament where any person healed by the power of God ever suffered from the same complaint. A blind person who received his sight did not at a later time retrogress to darkness. The miracles of Jesus and the apostles were long lasting. Fourth, it was instantaneous. There was no waiting period. The cure was always abrupt.

“Now Peter and John were going up into the temple at the hour

of prayer, being the ninth hour. And a certain man that was lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the door of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked to receive an alms. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him, with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but what I have, that give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk. And he took him by the right hand, and raised him up: and immediately his feet and his ankle-bones received strength. And leaping up, he stood, and began to walk; and he entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God: and they took knowledge of him, that it was he that sat for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him" (Acts 3:1-10). The God-authorized miracles of the New Testament were always without failure, or setback, perfect, and immediate. Anything that purports to be a miracle but that does not have these earmarks is not a God-authorized miracle. It may be a man-made fraud, it may be a Satan inspired fake, but it is not an act of God.

The miracles performed by approval of Jehovah in the New Testament were for the purpose of confirming revelation. God spoke through his appointed representatives and then sealed the message by signs and wonders. Nicodemus said to Jesus, "no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3:2). Nicodemus was right about that! The message of the New Testament is confirmed by signs and wonders. "God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will" (Heb. 2:4). If God performed miracles today, they would be available to all and would not be selective. "God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). They would be immediate and perfect and there would be no regression. The



purpose of God's miracles was to confirm his word. "God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will" (Heb. 2:4). "And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed. Amen" (Mark 16:20). When that purpose was realized, miracles ceased. Satan is defeated. The truth is established. Miracles are no more. They are not needed. If miracles had remained after the truth of the gospel was certified to be of God, then many people would follow Jesus for the wrong reason. If believers are put under a glass and protected from sickness and hurting, many would come to Jesus for the loaves and fishes. We are cautioned to not labor for the meat that is perishing, but for that which endures to eternal life (John 6:27).

"If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory" (Col. 3:1-4).

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## Has Man Outgrown the Gospel?

*By Allen Webster*

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Time is changing. The new soon becomes old; the modern becomes ancient; the technological breakthrough becomes yesterday's news; the popular becomes lost in the latest; and the up-to-date is soon out-of-date.

Eternal truth never changes. It reads the same today as yesterday and as it will tomorrow. It is "once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 1:3). Those who would change it become "accursed" (Gal. 1:6-9) and find that it will meet them in judgment unchanged (Rev. 20:12).

Modern man feels he has outgrown the ancient gospel. He thinks an absolute standard is obsolete. Exaltation of self and sensuality replace the idea of sin and spiritual death. He ridicules blood and the need for forgiveness. He scoffs at the virgin birth, sinless life, sacrificial death, and miraculous resurrection of Christ. He regards these as myths of a bygone era.

Has Man Outgrown the Gospel?

*Never!* The only way man can outgrow the gospel is to conquer sin. He has not. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" was true in Paul's day and is true today. Sin is still the transgression of the law of God (I John 3:4), which can include violating one's conscience (Rom. 14:23), omitting a duty (James 4:17), and lawlessness (I John 3:4).

*Never!* God, not man, determines what is sinful; sin will not change. Men may call sin by another name, but that will not alter what it really is. Forgiveness is still the most basic spiritual need that man has (Rom. 3:23; Rom. 6:23). The only way a person can be forgiven is through the gospel (Rom. 1:16).

*Never!* The gospel is the power to overcome temptation (Eph. 6:17), and man needs its power because temptation is still with us. Mankind has not conquered carnal desires. He still gives in to the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (I John 2:15-17). He cannot overcome without the power of the written word (Heb. 4:12).

*Never!* The devil is still "as a roaring lion" walking about "seeking whom he may devour" (I Pet. 5:8). Man is still in danger; therefore he needs the unchanged gospel, for it is

God's great power to save. When humans can defeat Satan without the truth, then they will no longer need the truth. They cannot. No one is strong enough to conquer the Evil One without an "it is written" (Matt. 4:1-11).

*Never!* The soul of man needs food. If man could invent a substitute for "soul food," he would not need the gospel, but he has not. Peter stated that the soul feeds on the "sincere milk of the word" (I Pet. 2:2), and Paul wrote that he could progress to eat "strong meat" from the hand of God (Heb. 5:12-14). The gospel fills those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Matt. 5:6).

*Never!* Man still needs a map to heaven. Men try to invent a roadway to heaven, but these maps will only get one lost. If we follow the road of "faith only" or the lane of "direct operation of the Holy Spirit" or the path of "once saved always saved," we are traveling a broad way that leads to destruction (Matt. 7:13-14). Only Christ and his gospel can lead one to heaven (John 14:6). "I must needs go home by the way of the cross; there's no other way but this."

Jesus plainly stated the conditions by which men can reach much needed salvation. A sinner must believe in Christ (Mark 16:16), decide to change his sinful life (repent) (Luke 13:5), confess the sweet name of Christ (Rom. 10:9-10), and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:4). We can choose to heed these scriptures or harass them, to read them or reject them, to respect them or ridicule them. Still, the same ancient gospel is the cure for all the spiritual ills of men! Why not obey today?