

The **Berean Searchlight**

Studying God's Word, Rightly Divided

April 2002



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From the Editor to You:



Dearly Beloved,

We have a motto here at the office: “To err is human. To really foul things up requires a computer.” Truer words have never been spoken! I don’t know about you but I have trouble keeping up with all the modern technology. It seems that by the time you learn a new program or operating system, it’s obsolete! Of course, then you have to update everything because nothing’s compatible with your old system and software.

The same principle applies to the Internet, except on a much grander scale. When a company hosts your website, they occasionally have to update their equipment to keep pace with the demand. This can involve adding new high speed servers, reprogramming or both. We have found ourselves in the middle of this very scenario with the company that hosts our BBS website. While you may have experienced technical difficulty connecting to the site lately, for the most part things have gone fairly smooth.

However, one area where we have had a major conflict is with our *Literature Corner*. This particular problem has made it impossible to place book and tape orders via the Internet. Since this is a secure section of the site, if one line of the encryption is incorrect it will not allow you to access the secure server. The hosting company assures us that they are working on the problem, but this is of little consolation if you’ve been trying to place an order. We do, however, want to sincerely *apologize* for the inconvenience, and personally thank you for your patience! Hopefully, by the time you receive this issue, the conflict will have been resolved.

We are constantly updating and adding new features to our website to provide as many spiritual helps as possible. The newest addition to the BBS site is *Two Minutes With the Bible*. You can now receive a weekly devotion via e-mail simply by clicking on the *Two Minutes* section of the Homepage, then just follow the instructions. These are the same messages that appear in over 800 newspapers across the country. Furthermore, past issues of the *Berean Searchlight* are now available in an archive file for future reference, plus we’ve added a “Search Engine” to make it easier to locate specific subjects. We also frequently update our *Bible Time* broadcast for those who are interested in audio messages.

If you’re a newcomer, we can be reached at <www.bereanbiblesociety.org>. Don’t forget to sign the *Guest Registry*!

Yours because of Calvary,
Paul M. Sadler
President

From Missouri:

"The *Searchlight* is a wonderful magazine. I look forward to it each month. The messages are great and enlightening and I thank God that He puts out a magazine of this spiritual quality."

From Ohio:

"Thanks again for your FAITHFULNESS. Each month you send me twenty blessings. Please keep them coming."

From Indiana:

"Praise the Lord for all the wonderful articles in the *Berean Searchlight*. I look forward each month to reading it and then pass it on to my family."

From Colorado:

"Pastor Sadler, your study, *The Preaching of the Cross*, is one of the best in-depth studies that I have ever read. This should be printed in a separate booklet form, as I would love to distribute them. Second best, please send me 24 extra copies of your January issue of the *Searchlight*." (Thanks, beloved, for your suggestion, we are taking it under serious consideration. Ed.)

From Florida:

"First of all, I would like to thank you for sending me the *Berean Searchlight*. It is a real blessing and I look forward to receiving it every month. I currently have two of your books by Mr. Stam: *Things That Differ* and *Paul, His Apostleship and Message*. I cannot tell you how much they have helped me clear up all of my so-called contradictions concerning salvation and other matters. If Christians would read just these two books, then they would know the truth and truly give Paul all the recognition he deserves."

From Michigan:

"I just wanted to say thank you for sending those wonderful studies to my father. Also for your faithful service in all you do. We know Christ the righteous judge will give to you a crown on that day."

From Arizona:

"We want to thank you so much for the stand that you at *Berean* have taken over the years. None of the *Searchlight* articles or commentaries are watered down. We appreciate your steadfastness in bringing us the truth of the Mystery program. Please stay strong and in good health."

From the Internet:

"Thank you for many years of great timely Bible Studies, I am forever indebted."

From Wisconsin:

"I am interested in the notes on the sample page of Revelation 12:1-4. It is titled: *A Page from Pastor Sadler's Notes*, subtitled: *Things to Come*. Are these notes from some book? Can we order these notes?" (Sorry, this was merely a page from my personal notes on the subject. Ed.)

From Iowa:

"We pray God's blessing on your work, and that many will find Christ Jesus for their Lord and Savior. We thank God for His many blessings."

From Massachusetts:

"Thanks for teaching others about God's grace. You folks are so sweet and dedicated. May you continue to bless others with your teachings of God's Word. God bless you and keep you."

From New York:

"May God bless each one as you send forth the message of God's wonderful saving faith."

From Nebraska:

"I always enjoy reading the *Berean Searchlight* articles and the mailbag sheets. The Cedar Lake, Indiana Conference is always so fulfilling with all the great messages from all the pastors we've had the pleasure to get acquainted with. Keep up the good work and may God continue to bless the staff and the writers."

From the Internet:

“On page 6 of the *Searchlight* on *Things to Come*—would you please do this for all verses in the Bible for all of us!!!! Just kidding!” (Oh, my!!! This reminded me of the famous words of the cartoon character Snagglepuss, “Heavens to murgatroid!” Ed.)

From Maryland:

“I heard the *Berean Searchlight* was a good source of information. Please put me on your mailing list. Thanks.”

From Ohio:

“In the February issue, I just read the article by Brother Kiszonas on *Unanswered Prayer*. Thank you for printing this. It was a great blessing to read the truths for the Body of Christ. I just finished reading through the February issue and am starting over. Thank you so much as you write this wonderful little booklet, full of the truth of God’s Word, rightly divided.”

From the Internet:

“I have just found your site and I can’t get enough. I’ve already looked at the available information except I’m having trouble getting your older *Searchlight* magazines or articles to come up. Can you help me, please?” (See the *Editor To You* on page 3. Ed.)

From Kenya, Africa:

“We are happy to let you know that the grace gospel is doing great things to us here. The fact is that we have come in contact with Genesis Maraat, he is a blessing to us. As we continue receiving your monthly mails, we pray that God will enable you to divide His Word rightly. We also pray for Pastor Stam in his aging moment.”

From Michigan:

“I appreciate the website as another resource for both my own studies as well as preparation for teaching.”

From Kentucky:

“I don’t know why the Lord shined His light upon His Word and let me see it rightly divided. However, I am very grateful that He did. Please use this small gift wherever needed to His glory.”

From the Internet:

“Thank you for sending the Bible readings. I am being blessed immensely by them. God bless all of the staff that put their time and effort into this wonderful work of truth.” (Did you know that *Two Minutes With the Bible* can be received via e-mail? Simply contact our website for instructions. Ed.)

From South Carolina:

“I have been saved since I was 20, after lots of years (and tears) where there once was confusion on certain issues, there is clarity.”

From Washington:

“I always enjoy the *Searchlight* and its good information. God bless all.”

From the Internet:

“You ‘done’ good. Your comments are very clear. Before the cross—conditional forgiveness, after the cross—unconditional forgiveness. Rightly dividing the Word explains it. I missed it. John is speaking to the Jews and the Kingdom Gospel. This has nothing to do with Paul’s Grace Gospel.” (As you can see, Brother Kurth has become an old hand at responding to the wide array of questions we receive. Ed.)

From Georgia:

“Thanking you for all you do. Hope this gift can help in some small way.”

From Washington:

“Thank you so much for the *Searchlight* every month, and also all the books I’ve read have given me such insight into the Word of God—special blessings to all of you!”

“These [Bereans] were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” —Acts 17:11

Does the Word of God Contradict Itself?



Satan has sought to undermine the authority of the Word of God since the beginning. He whispered to Eve, “Yea, hath God said,” suggesting God was withholding something from our first parents. But more often than not his attacks are far more subtle. The liberal, for example, would have us believe the Scriptures contradict them-

selves; therefore they cannot be trusted. This is nothing more than an attempt to cast a shadow of doubt upon the veracity of God’s Word.

Despite the claims of the liberal, God *never* contradicts Himself. He’s omniscient! He knows the end from the beginning; how could He possibly contradict Himself? When we’re confronted with an alleged contradiction, the problem isn’t with the Word of God; rather, it’s with *our* understanding of the Scriptures. Most times there is a simple solution to the problem.

The account of Judas’ death is often appealed to as a glaring contradiction:

“And he [Judas] cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself” (Matt. 27:5).

“Now this man [Judas] purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out” (Acts 1:18).

We believe the Acts record is merely an augmentation of Matthew’s account of Judas’ dishonorable end. After Judas hanged himself, either the limb or rope broke, and since the top part of the body is heavier than the lower extremity, he fell headlong to the bottom of the ravine where his body burst open upon striking the jagged rocks.

Another supposed contradiction is found in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians:

“Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand” (I Cor. 10:8).

“And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand” (Num. 25:9).

Once again, Paul’s account of the plague is simply a fuller description of what actually transpired during the wilderness wanderings. The key is found in the apostle’s words, “and fell in one day.” Paul reveals 23,000 died in this judgment on the same day, but according to Numbers, the total number of Israelites that perished, which included the days that followed, was 24,000. The apostle was merely emphasizing the seriousness of committing fornication, by showing how many fell in one day.

While these two purported contradictions are easily resolved, this is not always necessarily the case. In those areas where we are unable to adequately address a discrepancy, we must patiently wait upon the Lord for additional light, which may not be given until eternity.

—Pastor Sadler

The Life and Letters of the Apostle Peter

II Peter 2:1-9

By Paul M. Sadler



In the wake of September 11th, most Americans are still struggling to comprehend how 19 terrorists were able to carry out such a diabolical plan which took so many innocent lives. The answer is really quite simple—*deception!* They slipped across our borders on visas which allowed them to share in our freedom and liberty, although it was their intent to exploit it. There was nothing unusual about them that would have aroused suspicion. This, of course, was by design. They didn't wear military fatigues, carry machine guns, or announce their intentions. Quite the contrary, they had been trained to blend into the fabric of our society. It was not until the second plane crashed into the north tower of the *World Trade Center* that it became apparent there were terrorists among us. Sadly, it was too late!

BEWARE OF WOLVES IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many

shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.”

—II Pet. 2:1,2

As we know, there are many forms of evil in this world. Like the terrorists, *false teachers* ply their wares in similar fashion. They infiltrate the household of God for the sole purpose of leading men to perdition. These unscrupulous teachers are the emissaries of Satan who weave a web of deception to secure fame and fortune.

Having established that prophecy came through holy men who were moved by the Spirit in time past, Peter reminds his hearers that there were *also* false prophets among the people of Israel (Duet. 13:1-5). Then he adds, “even as there shall be false teachers among *you*,” that is, their posterity. They were not to think that they were exempt from these insidious attacks, nor should we. While the faces of evil may change from generation to generation, the objective to *deceive* is the same. They are spiritual terrorists!

Who exactly is a false teacher? First of all, we must distinguish between a false teacher and a teacher who is merely careless or inconsistent with a particular area of the Word of God.

For example, C. I. Scofield played a prominent role in the struggle to recover the gospel of the grace of God. After recently reading his biography, I was deeply touched by his profound dedication to produce a reference Bible that the average reader could understand and enjoy.

He systematically developed the dispensational themes taught in the Scriptures, placing a special emphasis on the distinction between law and grace. But Dr. Scofield never fully saw the distinctive character of Paul's apostleship and message; therefore, he taught that the Church began on the day of Pentecost. While he lacked understanding in certain areas of the Scriptures he nevertheless was faithful to the light God had given him.

So then, teaching error through *ignorance* does not mean a Bible teacher is a false teacher. Who among us has all truth? We are all growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is why we emphasize the importance of being a Berean and diligently studying to see if these things are so.

A false teacher is someone who *knowingly*, deceitfully, and deliberately teaches that which is untrue. We normally associate false teachers with the unregenerate; however, this is not always the case. Paul wrote to the Galatians regarding his defense of the gospel of the grace of God at Jerusalem: "And that because of **false brethren** unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you" (Gal. 2:4,5).

Those who understand the truth of Paul's apostleship and message, but deny it, and teach what they *know* to be error are false teachers. But why would a pastor or teacher purposely teach that which is wrong? The reasons are troubling to say the least, but a few that come

to mind are pride, fear of rejection, personal gain, etc. They count the cost, and the cost is just too high. But these brethren seem to have forgotten that they must appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ. What shall be their defense for withholding the truth of Paul's gospel from those whom God entrusted to their care?

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not" (II Pet. 2:1-3).

The unregenerate false teachers spoken of here are the masters of deception. Peter effectively warned his countrymen to beware of those who after his death would lie in wait to deceive. They are wolves in sheep's clothing. It is important to note that these deceivers "bring in damnable [destructive] heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them." They deliberately bring falsehood *alongside* the truth that they might deceive the unsuspecting. This is often accomplished by introducing something *new* as a fuller expression of sound doctrine. Consequently, it is essential to heed the warning: "Beware! Error often rides to its deadly work on the back of the truth."

In addition to teaching *unlimited* redemption, the above passage also demonstrates that these false teachers denied the very One who

provided redemption for them. While they probably taught their hearers that Christ was a great prophet and teacher, they rejected the truth that He was the Redeemer of Israel. These “wells without water” blatantly *denied* Christ’s substitutionary death, precious shed blood, and bodily resurrection. They even called into question the inspiration of the Scriptures themselves when they defiantly declared, “Where is the promise of His coming?” (II Pet. 3:4). The trademark of all false teachers is the denial of the Deity of Christ, commonly known as Gnosticism, which was prevalent at that time.

But how do these workers of iniquity so effectively mislead their followers? As Peter says, “many shall follow” them. Since the natural man is inherently religious and would rather believe a lie, he’s easy prey for the “pernicious ways” and “feigned words” of a false teacher. Notice they are identified by their pernicious ways. In other words, they’re outrageous, shameless, and given to excess. These unscrupulous preachers have magnetic personalities that draw men to them. And with “feigned words” or *persuasive* speech, which could deceive the Devil himself, if it were possible, they lead men to destruction. Mark these words and mark them well, unsound doctrine is always accompanied by *ungodly* behavior. The two go hand in hand!

The goal of these false teachers is to exploit their unwary followers. They are purely out for financial gain; therefore, Peter warns those that are intrigued by their notoriety accordingly, they will “make merchandise of you.” Like a thief, they will rob you blind, while promising you health, wealth, and prosperity.

Stop and think, *wealth* is the crown jewel of most cults. As it has been said, “error goes first class, while the truth goes begging!”

ETERNAL JUDGMENT

“Whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not” (II Pet. 2:3).

Although intellectually “enlightened” minds deny the existence of eternal damnation, false teachers are in for a rude awakening. They may think their devious schemes will never come to light, but Peter reveals otherwise when he says, “Whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.” Men may deny the judgment to come, but the time is *appointed* when those who have rejected the counsel of God against themselves must stand before the Judge of all the earth (Acts 17:31). The judgment of God is described by Peter as a living thing. Clearly, it is not idle, nor does it sleep!

“The trademark of all false teachers is the denial of the Deity of Christ...”

Those who are responsible for drowning the souls of men in false doctrine will be brought to damnation or *ruin* in the lake of fire as a consequence of their actions. Sadly, those who believe their lies will suffer the same fate. For those who scorn at the idea of a coming judgment, Peter sets forth three examples of the justice of God.

“For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to

hell [Gr. *tartarus*], and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment” (II Pet. 2:4).

As we saw in an earlier lesson, these were the angels who left their first habitation and committed unspeakable atrocities in the days of Noah. God cast these angelic beings down to *tartarus*, which is located in the center of the earth on the sides of the bottomless pit (Isa. 14:15 cf. Rev. 20:1-3). They are confined in the blackness of darkness until the Great White Throne Judgment. If God spared not these angels, who are a higher creation than man, what hope do these false teachers have of escaping the wrath of God? They, too, are guilty of rebelling against God and leading men to perdition.

“And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly” (II Pet. 2:5).

For over 100 years Noah warned those of his day about the impending judgment of the flood. But they seemed as idle tales to those who listened. Consequently, “They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all” (Luke 17:27). While there isn’t anything essentially wrong with eating and giving in marriage, those in Noah’s day did so as though God did not even exist. They had “corrupted His way,” that is, His way of marriage—one man for one woman. Since both “marrying wives” and “giving in marriage” are mentioned in conjunction with one another, the former is an indication they were adulterers and also guilty of committing polygamy (Gen. 4:19 cf. 6:11).

It has been well said, “every spike that Noah drove into the ark was a sermon to that ungodly generation, declaring that judgment was about to fall.” Noah faithfully warned his generation until the day he entered into the ark. This was the world of the ungodly that were swept away by the waters of the great flood and perished. The lesson is clear for all those who handle the Word of God deceitfully: **REMEMBER THE DAYS OF NOAH!** God honors His Word, even to the unbeliever.

“And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly” (II Pet. 2:6).

Peter is adamant that the cities of the plain stand as a testimony against the ungodly practice of homosexuality. Not only is this a grievous sin against God, it’s *unnatural*. Furthermore the Scriptures cite homosexuality as being an evidence of a culture’s advanced decline. If there is one sin that will bring the swift judgment of God, it’s this sin, as Sodom and Gomorrha demonstrates. The fire and brimstone God rained down on these cities was so intense that they have not been found to this day (Gen. 19:24-29; Lev. 20:13; Rom. 1:26-28; I Cor. 6:9,10). While God loves the sinner, He hates sin. Dear friend, God wants you to know the joy of sins *forgiven*, simply believe Christ died for your sins, was buried, and rose again.

As you can see, God is serious about judgment. These judgments are merely a foretaste of the *eternal* judgment that awaits those that deceitfully lead men astray. False teachers may appear to have gotten away with their evil deeds, but a day of reckoning is drawing nearer and nearer.



THE ATTRACTION OF THE WORLD

“And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds). The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished” (II Pet. 2:7-9).

Remember those days when your parents took you to a carnival? You were awestruck by the lights, and sounds, and all the activity, not to mention going home with all your winnings. You thought this was the greatest thing since sliced bread! If it were possible, you would have run away from home and joined all the fun. Well, Satan uses this same principle to lure the believer into the world’s embrace. A good example is Lot. As a young man he had visited Egypt with his Uncle Abraham which left a lasting impression upon him. Even though they eventually departed from Egypt, Egypt never left Lot. He was drawn to the ways of the world. It’s like the old saying, “You can take the farmer off the farm, but you can’t take the farm out of the farmer!”

Interestingly the descent was gradual: Lot “looked” with *longing* to the plain of Jordan. Then he pitched his tent toward Sodom. Finally, he moved into the city (Gen.

13:10,12; 14:12). Initially Lot found the world everything he thought it would be—wealth, power, glamour, acceptance, etc. In fact, he quickly became prominent in the city, sitting at the gate as one of their judges. But Peter gives us some insight about Lot not found in the Book of Genesis. Over the course of time, the filthy language and ungodly lifestyle of the Sodomites “vexed” or *tormented* his righteous soul. He knew the vile affections of the men at Sodom were not only contrary to nature, but reprehensible to a holy and righteous God. Yet he remained among them!

Although Lot was a righteous man, his testimony was irreparably damaged due to his close association with the world. You can’t sleep with skunks without smelling like a skunk. When the angels of the Lord announced that Sodom and Gomorrah were going to be destroyed, Lot warned his sons-in-law, but to no avail. He was so entangled with the ungodliness of the Sodomites that Lot’s family completely dismissed his warning—“He seemed as one that mocked” (Gen. 19:14). They didn’t take him seriously because they thought he was merely jesting.

Amazingly, when the angels prepared to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot “lingered,” therefore they had to take him by the hand to lead him out of the city. What could have possibly compelled him to hesitate? Lust! Leaving Sodom meant leaving family and friends. It meant leaving behind bank accounts and influence and security. Lot may have escaped with his life, but his loss of reward will be eternal, a solemn lesson for those that follow in his footsteps. The world’s attractions are nothing more than empty illusions. It’s much like the

carnival; years later, when you return, it leaves you with the sinking feeling that you were deceived.

But the Lord knows how to *deliver* the believer out of trials and temptations, as Noah and Lot illustrate (II Pet. 2:9). This will be an especially comforting passage to the future Tribulation saints that pray the disciples' prayer "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be

Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven...lead us not into temptation [the hour of trial], but deliver us from [the] evil [one]." As you can see, the Lord will also grant deliverance to His chosen people at that day (Rev. 12:13-16). He also knows how to "reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be *punished*."

To Be Continued!



Question Box

"I was always taught that Christ blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us. If this is true, how do we explain Paul's instructions to the Corinthians to 'keep the ordinances'?"

This is a good example of why it is so important to consult the original languages at times to arrive at the *proper* sense. Although the same word appears in our English translation of the Scriptures, when we consult the original language we find there are two different terms used with two entirely diverse meanings.

"Blotting out the handwriting of *ordinances* that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His Cross" (Col. 2:14).

In Colossians Paul is careful to use the Greek word *dogma*. This term is defined by Thayer as being a *decree*, which here refers to "the rules and requirements of the law of Moses." So then, the finished work of Christ has abolished the covenant of the Law.

"Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the *ordinances*, as I delivered them to you" (I Cor. 11:2).

As we turn to I Corinthians, the apostle uses the Greek word *paradosis* which denotes to *deliver*, that is, "a handing down or to hand over." In other words, the Corinthians were to keep and observe all the things Paul had handed down to them. The apostle gives us a classic example later in the chapter when he states: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered [verb form Gr. *paradidoomi*] unto you" (I Cor. 11:23). What had the apostle *delivered* to the Corinthians to be observed? Clearly, in this context, it was the Lord's Supper. We are to hold fast to it "until He comes."

—Pastor Sadler

It is with praise and thanksgiving that we offer the following excerpt from Pastor Stam's forthcoming commentary on the Book of Colossians. These messages were originally delivered by Brother Stam on our *Bible Time* Radio Broadcast, which aired over one hundred stations across the country. Since these messages were so well received, we've had them transcribed, edited, and proofread so everyone can enjoy the wonderful truth of Paul's epistle to the Colossians. —Ed.

The Knowledge of His Will

By Cornelius R. Stam

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” —Col. 1:9

GOD'S WILL FOR TODAY

Now beloved, we must have this clearly in mind as we study this passage in the first chapter of the Colossian letter. Every true spiritual believer will heartily desire to know, and do, the will of God. It is my earnest prayer that you may indeed “be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.”

Sad to say, however, the vast majority of believers reading this passage in Colossians One think only in terms of God's will for *their* lives in *their* particular circumstances.

For example, a young Christian asks: “What is God's will for my life? Should I go into the ministry or become a missionary? And if a missionary, should I go to China, Africa or India? Or would God have me stay in business and help to finance His work?” But while the young man is so concerned about God's will for the details of *his life*, he is woefully ignorant of *GOD'S WILL*, i.e., *what it is God wants done*. The emphasis is put upon *himself*, rather than upon God and His great plan for the present dispensation.

So, I beg of you my dear friend, don't misunderstand this passage, when Paul prays for the Colossians, and he certainly would pray for us, “that [we] might be filled with the *knowledge* of [God's] will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.”

Colossians 1:9 does not refer to God's will then in *a given situation*, but to His long hidden purpose and program as revealed in the Pauline Epistles. He rightly holds us responsible to learn what this is:

“Having made known unto us THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself” (Eph. 1:9).

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

“Redeeming [buying up] the time, because the days are evil.

“WHEREFORE BE YE NOT UNWISE, BUT UNDERSTANDING WHAT THE WILL OF THE LORD IS” (Eph. 5:15-17).

Sadly, the majority of God's people seem to think that His will should accommodate itself to their fluctuating experiences. When they are in

the depths of despair and do not know where to turn, they cry to the Lord to show them His will. When on the mountaintop, maybe called upon to choose between two attractive alternatives, they ask the Lord again to show them His will. And if you draw a line to illustrate it, part of it would be way down and then the graph would go way up, of course. But all the while they neglect to inquire about *His* objective, or to learn how *they* may fit into *His* plan and purpose. This purpose is clearly defined for us in the Epistles of Paul. It runs straight as an arrow and *we* should conform ourselves to *it*.

Now God is interested—I don't want you to misunderstand me—He is very interested in whatever concerns us. And He would have us look to Him for guidance in every detail of our lives. But let us put the *emphasis* where it belongs. If a man is ignorant of the will and purpose of God, what good is it to inquire whether he should enter the ministry or go to Africa or China? He will do as much harm as good wherever he goes. On the other hand, one who does have an intelligent understanding of the will of God and has been gripped by it will have little danger of remaining unused in the Lord's service.

If we would be in the center of God's will, then, we must come to a knowledge and an appreciation of the great *secret* revealed through Paul for us today. This alone can give us a true sense of our place in God's program, broadening and balancing our spiritual experience.

Let us then labor fervently in prayer, as Epaphras did for the

saints at Colosse, that we might "*stand perfect and complete in all the will of God*" (Col. 4:12).

Now in seeking to determine God's will in the particular circumstances of life, the truly spiritual believer will take little heed to the very things that others think are so decisive. He will never depend on "getting the mind of God through prayer"; hoping for "inner promptings"—as one writer put it, "Not a voice, but an impression." Nor will he go to the "promise box" and flip his Bible open at random to learn God's will. If for no other reason, simply because he limits God to the particular promises in the box.

No, *no*, such an one will look for guidance in answer to prayer, to be sure, but he'll do this by prayerfully using his God-given faculties in the light of the written Word, "*rightly divided.*"

“...a knowledge of the
Mystery broadens us
and establishes us, as
we lose our wills in His.”

Beloved, God has given us *hands* to work with, *hearts* to love with, and *minds* to think with, and He expects us to use them all to His glory. Hence, in any given situation we should use the common sense that He's given us in the light of His Word.

Naturally, this affects our wills, too, and our prayer lives, but here again a knowledge of the Mystery broadens us and establishes us, as we lose our wills in His.

We no longer confuse “this present evil age” with the kingdom which our Lord proclaimed and in connection with which He said: *“And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive”* (Matt. 21:22). Under the present circumstances it is a good thing that we do not receive “whatsoever” we ask, even in faith, for we read in Romans 8:26 that *“we know not what we should pray for as we ought.”* The same passage, however, goes on to tell us what we *do* know:

“And we know that all things work [Lit. “are being worked”] together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28).

When we exercise the deepest, most implicit faith in God, we will not insist that He grant our desires, but will place ourselves unreservedly in His care and keeping, fully assured that he will work all out for our good. Thus the apostle exhorts us:

“Be careful [anxious] for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God” (Phil. 4:6).

“And....” And *what?* *“And you will receive what you ask for?”* No! Be anxious for *nothing*, but in *everything*, whatever the circumstances, with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God,

“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:7).

It may be necessary for your own good that He withhold what you have asked for, but sustained

by a sense of His love and grace you will not crack or go to pieces, for having talked to Him about it and left it with him, His peace—the peace that passes human understanding—will keep, or garrison, your *heart* and *mind* through Christ Jesus.

There is something more blessed, then, than merely getting what we ask for in prayer. It is spoken of again by the Apostle Paul, in Ephesians 3:20,21.

“Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

“Unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.”

GOD’S WILL FOR YOU

Now this holds good even with regard to calls to special service for Christ; whether to the pastorate, the mission field, or any other branch of the work. The truly spiritual child of God will not look for, or depend upon, some overwhelming emotional experience as an indication that God has called him to the ministry.

Much less will he expect what so many have called a *Macedonian vision*, for he will have learned that Paul’s call to Macedonia in Acts 16:9-10 is the last such call recorded in Scripture, and that it belongs with the signs of a past dispensation.

First, all believers are called to make known what Paul calls *“the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the Mystery”* (Rom. 16:25). The written Word of God, together with the appalling need all about us, constitutes an urgent call to this ministry.

Now, all are not meant to minister in the same capacity. Some may accomplish much more for Christ in business than they could as pastors or missionaries. So here the particular qualifications of the individual and the particular ministry to which he is best suited are involved.

There is no room for superstition in such matters, beloved. These matters are too important. It is rather for each individual to ask God for light from the Word and for wisdom to consider the need, the circumstances, and his own talents objectively, praying for an open door to that field of service where he can accomplish most for his Lord.

The infinite importance of understanding God's will can be better appreciated if we consider that we are now living in the tense moments between man's declaration of war on God, and God's counter-declaration of war on man, so that there is no time to lose in winning men to Christ. True, man made his declaration of war long ago, but still these moments are just added


“God has given us *hands* to work with, *hearts* to love with, and *minds* to think with, and He expects us to use them all to His glory.”

one after another. God has given us no promise that He won't close the day of grace at any time.

So the apostle “begs” the unsaved “not to receive the grace of God in vain.” He says, “Behold, *now* is the accepted time, behold, *now* is the day of salvation” (II Cor. 6:1,2).

In the light of this, how we should pray for ourselves and for our fellow believers “*that [we] may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God*” (Col. 4:12).

I hope this has helped you to understand what the apostle means when he says,

“[I] do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of [God’s] will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col. 1:9). 

What America Needs

“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (II Chron. 7:14).

“‘My people’ specifically meant Israel, and ‘their land’ meant the land of Israel. While we may learn general lessons from this Scripture about prayer and repentance, it is absolutely unbiblical [undispensational] for Christians today to apply this promise specifically to themselves and the land in which they live. The United States has had professing Christians as President and in many other high offices, without overall progress toward godliness in this country. What lost Americans need is the gospel, not coercion toward a godly lifestyle characterized by ‘family values’ and ‘traditional morals.’”

—Dave Hunt (quoted in Berean Call, Dec. 2000, p. 4)

Our dear friend, Robert Brock, is one of our senior Grace Bible teachers whose ministry has touched the lives of many. Besides being the Editor of the popular *Journal of Pauline Dispensationalism*, Bob has authored a number of thought-provoking tracts, such as we have here. —Ed.

The Teachings of Christ

By Robert C. Brock

The most important book in the world is the Bible. The Bible is centered around the most important Person in the world, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is important because He is God manifested in the flesh. Christ came to reveal the purposes of God the Father. These purposes are written down in the Bible, thus revealing the mind of God.

The teachings of Christ are related to three different time periods—past, present, and future. He is God’s spokesman to the human race. We must notice the contents of each in order to understand the Bible.

I. THE PAST TEACHING OF CHRIST

The Lord Jesus was born under the Law of Moses (Galatians 4:4). When He ministered to Israel, and it was exclusively to them (Matthew 15:24), everything He did and said was according to this Law (Matthew 5:17). The Law of Moses was given to Israel some 1500 years earlier, and it regulated the whole life of the Jew as well as the Nation of Israel.

God’s good news to Israel was called the Gospel of the Kingdom. Various miracles attended its preaching, and remission of sins was by water baptism. The feast days, the various commandments,

the many sabbaths were all part of the Jew’s religion which is called Judaism.

II. THE PRESENT TEACHING OF CHRIST

The ministry of Christ did not stop with His ascension in the first chapter of the book of Acts. Christians have failed to realize that when Saul is saved in Acts 9, a **NEW** ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ is begun by God, and this **NEW** ministry ushers in this present age of grace. Saul’s name is changed to Paul, and he is designated as the Apostle of the Gentiles (Romans 11:13). He is given revelations from the risen Christ, and these are the revelations embracing Christianity. Christianity presents:

1. **A New Gospel**—the Gospel of the grace of God. This gospel is completely separated from water baptism (1 Corinthians 1:17). This gospel presents faith in Christ as the only requirement for salvation (Romans 4:5; Galatians 3:26; Ephesians 2:8,9).

2. **A New Organism**—the Body of Christ, the Church, composed of all believers saved by the grace of God in this present dispensation.

3. **A New Body of Divine Truth**—known as the Revelation of the Mystery (Romans 16:25). It

was kept secret, hid in God until revealed to Paul. This is how Christ is to be presented today.

4. **A New Period of Time**—the Dispensation of the Grace of God, also known as the Dispensation of the Mystery (Ephesians 3:2,9). This is the Bible name for today's age.

5. **A New Apostle**—Paul. He is our Apostle, not Peter nor John or any other. The authority of Christ for this age has been committed to Paul.

6. **New Blessings**—spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). This is according to the Mystery.

All of this truth came from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (Galatians 1:11,12), and Paul was chosen by Him to write down His revelation TO US in his epistles. This body of truth is complete in itself. There are hundreds of commandments contained in Christianity to guide Christians in their lives. And only in Paul's writings do we find that the entire Law of Moses, the past teaching for Israel, has been **ABOLISHED** by Christ on the Cross (Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14).

III. THE *FUTURE* TEACHING OF CHRIST

The Book of Revelation, the last book in the Bible, is the teaching of Christ concerning the future of Israel and the world. The events in this book will begin **AFTER** this present age is brought to a close at the Rapture of the Church, the Body of Christ. The bulk of the book contains the judgments of God upon the human race because of unbelief. All the rebels against God will be purged out

beginning with Israel and reaching to all the Gentiles. Christ revealed this to the Apostle John (Revelation 1:1,2). The book closes with the new heavens and new earth of Isaiah 66:22, and prophecy will have been fulfilled.

POPULAR ERRORS CONCERNING THE TEACHINGS OF CHRIST

Much error has been propagated in respect to the teachings of Christ. This has caused a lack of Bible study and has made the visible church a weak witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. Some of these errors are:

1. The idea of a Judeo-Christian heritage. Christianity is not an outgrowth of Judaism. Christianity is entirely separate from Judaism.

2. The idea that Christ preached Christianity to Israel. This is utterly false. He preached Judaism to His earthly people.

3. The idea that the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John present Christianity because they deal with the earthly life of Christ.

4. The idea of only one gospel in the Bible. The Bible never states there is only one gospel. The Gospel of the grace of God is far different than the Gospel of the Kingdom. Those that preach the Gospel of the Kingdom are misleading the public, for they are really preaching Judaism rather than Christianity. See Galatians 2:7.

5. The idea of resurrecting the Law of Moses and forcing it on the Gentiles as a way of life.

6. The idea that being Pauline in doctrine and practice is an extreme interpretation. Many times Paul told the early Gentile believers to

follow him (1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; Philippians 3:17). **Following Paul is following Christ.**

7. The idea that we are to follow Christ in His earthly life. Paul plainly stated that we are not to **know Him** after the flesh (2 Corinthians 5:16). This would be glorying in the flesh (1 Corinthians 1:29).

8. The idea that Law and Grace can be mixed together and make believers strong in the Lord.

9. The idea that the Bible **only** presents the eternal, changeless principles of God. Some of God's principles have changed, and this makes all the difference in the world.

10. The idea that Judaism and Christianity are to be harmonized into one religion.


The only way revival can come is to get back to Pauline truth. This happened in the past, Martin Luther being the prime example as he saw the light on Paul's presentation of justification by faith alone in Christ.

If your pastor is not preaching the Lord Jesus Christ according

“...the Revelation of the Mystery (Romans 16:25)...was kept secret, hid in God until revealed to Paul. This is how Christ is to be presented today.”

to the Revelation of the Mystery, he is not preaching God's truth for today.

All the world is going to be judged by Paul's gospel (Romans 2:16), and you better make sure you have been saved by CHRIST ALONE or you will have no hope of spending eternity with Him.

Christian friend, you better believe what God has revealed to the Apostle Paul before you go to be with Him or you will suffer for it at the judgment seat of Christ. If you have to change your mind about some interpretations as being Bible truths, you will profit immensely by it. Don't let a closed mind and attitude keep you from enjoying the spiritual blessings of Christianity found in Paul's writings. 

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Contact Person:

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Berean Grace Bible Church

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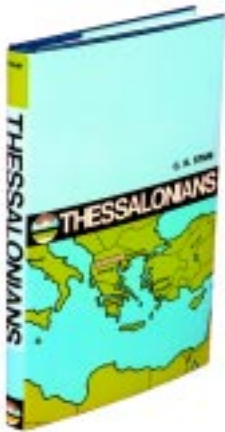
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THE BBI BYLINE

But What Happened?

Matthew 4:17

By W. Edward Bedore, Th.D.
Executive Director, *Berean Bible Institute*

“From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17).

The first words recorded as spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ when He began His earthly ministry are: *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* He *“then went about all Galilee teaching and preaching the gospel (good news) of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people”* (Matt. 4:23). All this was in strict accordance with what the prophets of Israel had declared years before. The promised Messiah had finally come, Israel’s reproof would be taken away and the time of great blessing and prosperity for God’s chosen people would soon come upon the favored nation.

But it has now been almost two thousand years since Jesus Christ came upon the scene, and still the kingdom has not been realized.

What happened? Has God’s promise been made void? Has He cast away His people? Was God simply not able to fulfill the words of Israel’s ancient prophets?

This question has perplexed many and brought confusion in large doses into the church. Legion are the theologians and Bible teachers who have tried to explain away God’s promises to Israel pertaining to the kingdom that one day will be brought to this earth, when Jesus Christ comes to rule in righteousness. The problem is that most view the Bible as all of it pertaining to the dispensation we live in today.

The problems disappear when we heed the Apostle Paul’s admonition to *“rightly divide the word of truth.”* Paul explains in Romans chapters 9-11 why the kingdom has not yet materialized. Israel’s hope will one day be manifest, but now God is working out His secret (mystery) program as revealed to the Apostle Paul for us today.



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NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

A STALWART CALLED HOME: We just received word that our dear Brother Clifford Meyer was promoted to glory on January 2, 2002. Brother Meyer was a faithful teacher of the Word who is going to be deeply missed by those who sat under his ministry, one of whom was Beverly Nygaard. Beverly writes: "He was a true servant of the Lord Jesus, and I for one, along with my husband David, have become 'Bereans' since our enlightenment through Mr. Meyer's teaching. 'Search the Scriptures and *know*,' he would say, 'don't take anyone's word, but God's Word Himself, to be the truth.'" Amen!

DISTANCE BIBLE STUDIES: Good news! DBS has recently released—GENESIS AND ROMANS. The study is self-contained with 13 Lessons and exams, as well as mid-course and final exams, followed by an explanation to the answers given. If you are interested, you can order the course for \$20.00 postpaid directly from *Distance Bible Studies*, P.O. Box 97, Altoona, Wisconsin 54720.

THE MGF SPRING BIBLE CONFERENCE is scheduled to be held this year on May 31st through June 2nd at the *Miracle Hills Ranch* in Bethany, Missouri. The theme is *Israel and the Church*. The guest speakers for these meetings are Dr. W. Edward Bedore, Pastor Dan Wolgast, and Missionary Bernardo Craesmeyer. For more information, please contact: Ken Lawson, president (217) 623-4014 or Kevin Heyle (816) 737-2268. God's very best to these brethren as they break the Bread of Life.

THE CELEBRATE GRACE CAMP will be held July 8-12, 2002 at *Camp Colorado* located about one hour SW of Denver. In addition to the sound preaching of the Word, there's good fellowship, food, and fun, not to mention the low cost! For reservations and additional information, please call, write, or e-mail Jerry & Judy Worthley, 0627 Co. Rd. 3, Canon City, CO 81212. Phone: (719) 276-2469\E-mail: <JerNJudy@Eudoramail.com>. Happy camping!

HONOR TO WHOM HONOR IS DUE: The lighthouse picture that appears on the front cover of this issue was taken by James Rasmussen of Mount Prospect, Illinois. James is a professional photographer who has traveled extensively around the world in search of the perfect picture. Needless to say, his gallery is impressive. If you would like to visit Mr. Rasmussen's website, he can be reached at: <www.razfoto.com>.

*The picture of the lighthouse that appears on the front cover is the *New Presque Isle Lighthouse* located in Presque Isle, Michigan. It is the tallest lighthouse on the Great Lakes.

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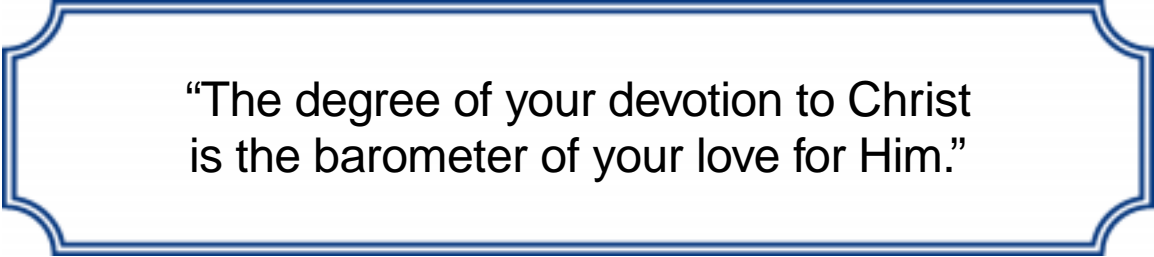
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