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 East High St. Church of *Christ*
 2863 East High St.
 Springfield, OH 45505
 Sunday Bible Study—9:00 am. Wednesday Bible
 Worship.—10:00 am & 6:00 pm. Study 7:00 pm.



"How many therefore that heard these words of mine, and doubt them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock?"
 (Matthew 7:24)

Better Study Habits

By Larry G. Reynolds, Co-Editor

Much of the indifference in religious matters is due to the improper manner in which we approach the subject. Many do not have a systematic approach in Bible study. Many approach the Bible as if it were just another story book. Many do not study the Bible on a regular basis. This is why Bible knowledge as a whole has declined through the years. A recent article from the Associated Press titled "US embarrassingly weak in Bible knowledge". The article discusses the results of a poll taken by George Gallup Jr. The following is a portion of the article. A poll of 1200 randomly selected Americans this year, 60 percent said they attended church on Easter but 25 percent said they didn't know the occasion commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And 82 percent said they believe the Bible is the literal or "inspired" word of God, but only 21 percent said they study it." I wonder how we would fair if a poll were taken in our local congregation?

The following is some basic material that I have presented in several Bible classes through the years. I hope this will aide you in your study of God's wonderful book.

Introduction

1. The Bible is a library of books (66 books total, 39 in the Old Testament, 27 in the New Testament).

2. It was written by about 40 men over a period of about 1500 years.
3. The purpose of the Bible: The glory of God, and the salvation of man through Jesus Christ our Lord.
4. Numerous passages suggest our obligation to study. 2 Timothy 2:15; Acts 17:11; Hebrews 5:12; John 7:17.

DISCUSSION

1. The Bible has two major divisions.
 - (1) The Old Testament was written for our learning (Rom 15:4).
 - (2) The New Testament is clearly distinguished from the Old Testament. (Hebrews 8:6-13; 2 Corinthians 3:5-15; Colossians 2:14-17).
2. The Bible has three dispensations.
 - (1) **Patriarchy** – From the creation to the Mosaic Law. There is evidence that patriarchy continued for all but the Jews (Romans 7:7; 5:13; 1:18-32; Acts 10).
 - (2) **Judaism** – From the Mosaic Law to Acts 2.
 - (3) **Christianity** – Embracing the events from Pentecost of Acts 2 to the judgment.
3. The Bible has four subdivisions in the Old Testament.
 - (1) **Law**, containing the five books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.
 - (2) **History**, containing the twelve books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther.
 - (3) **Poetry**, containing the five books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon.
 - (4) **Prophecy**, containing the five major prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel and Daniel; and the twelve minor prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.
4. The Bible has four subdivisions in the New Testament.

Statement Of Purpose

The primary aim of "Upon The Rock is the publishing of material concerning first principles and evangelism. Our hope for this publication is that It will be helpful in evangelistic efforts wherever it is received. It remains our goal to contrast the horror of sin with the glory of Christ's church.

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The days fashioned for me,
When as yet there were none of them.

[17] How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!

How great is the sum of them!

[18] If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand;

When I awake, I am still with You.

[19] Oh, that You would slay the wicked, O God! Depart from me, therefore, you bloodthirsty men.

[20] For they speak against You wickedly;

Your enemies take Your name in vain.

[21] Do I not hate them, O Lord, who hate You? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You?

[22] I hate them with perfect hatred;
I count them my enemies.

[23] Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me, and know my anxieties;

[24] And see if there is any wicked way in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting.

“Upon The Rock” is published monthly by the East High Street Church of Christ and the West Side Church of Christ. This project is under the oversight of the elders. Serving as elders for the East High Street congregation are Russell Baugh and Gary Seegraves. Serving as elders for the West Side congregation are Larry Reynolds, Herb Smith and George Welker.

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(1) **The Gospel**, with the four accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

(2) **The History**, containing the one book of Acts.

(3) **The Epistles**, containing the twenty-one books, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1,2,3 John, and Jude.

(4) **The Prophecy**, containing the book of Revelation.

5. The Bible has fifteen natural periods.

(1) The antediluvian period, embracing every Biblical event from creation to the flood. This covered about 1656 years.

(2) The postdiluvian period, from the flood to the call of Abram, about 472 years.

(3) The Patriarchal period, from the call of Abram to the descent into Egypt, about 215 years.

(4) The Egyptian period, from the descent into Egypt to the crossing of the Red Sea, about 215 years.

(5) The wilderness wandering period, from the crossing of the Red Sea to the crossing Jordan River.

(6) The conquest period, from the crossing of the Jordan to the appointment of the first judge, about 51 years.

(7) The Judges period, from the appointment of the first judge to the establishment of the kingdom, about 332 years.

(8) The United Kingdom period, from the establishment of the kingdom to the division of the kingdom, 120 years.

(9) The Divided Kingdom period, from the division of the kingdom to the fall of Samaria, in 722 BC, about 250 years.

(10) The Kingdom of Judah period, from the fall of Samaria to the fall of Jerusalem, about 150 years.

(11) The Captivity period, from the fall of Jerusalem to the decree of Cyrus, about 70 years.

(12) The Restoration period, from the decree of Cyrus to the end of Nehemiah's work, with which the Old Testament closes, about 90 years.

(13) The Between the Testament period, from the end of Nehemiah's work to the coming of John the Baptizer, about 440 years.

(14) The Life of Christ period, from the coming of John the Baptizer to Pentecost, Act 2, about 34 years.

(15) The New Testament church period, from Pentecost of Acts 2 to the end of Revelation, about 50 years.

Continued Next Month

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The Rapture Theory

By Mark Reynolds

Introduction

In interpreting the prophetic teachings of the Scriptures, it is almost universally acknowledged by the majority of denominations that at the close of this age, there will be a period of great tribulation; at which time the Church on earth will be raptured (or taken to heaven without suffering physical death) to be forever with the Lord, joining all those saints who have died in previous times. For almost 150 years now, the religious world has debated just when the rapture would take place, before or after the supposed Great Tribulation. Most religious figures hold to the Pre-Tribulation rapture; however, very few of the members of denominational Churches know anything of the history and background of this doctrine or of the foundation of this viewpoint. The Rapture Theory is based on the allegation that the return of Christ will usher in a millennial reign in which Christ will occupy an earthly throne in Jerusalem, and that immediately prior to these events He will secretly take out of the world His saints for a period of seven years (during which time a great Tribulation will fall

Psalm 139

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

O Lord, You have searched me and known me.

[2] You know my sifting down and my rising up;
You understand my thought afar off.

[3] You comprehend my path and my lying down,
And are acquainted with all my ways.

[4] For there is not a word on my tongue,
But behold, O Lord, You know it altogether.

[5] You have hedged me behind and before,
And laid Your hand upon me.

[6] Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
It is high, I cannot attain it.

[7] Where can I go from Your Spirit?

Or where can I flee from Your presence?

[8] If I ascend into heaven, You are there;
If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.

[9] If I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

[10] Even there Your hand shall lead me,
And Your right hand shall hold me.

[11] If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," Even the night
shall be light about me;

[12] Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night
shines as the day,

The darkness and the light are both alike to You

[13] For You formed my inward parts,
You covered me in my mother's womb

[14] I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made,
Marvelous are Your works,

And that my soul knows very well

[15] My frame was not hidden from You,

When I was made in secret,

And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth;

[16] Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed.
And in Your book they all were written,

The kingdom of heaven was highly advertised.

Daniel, about 600 years before Jesus, told about five great kingdoms to come - Daniel 2:36-45. Isaiah wrote about this in Isaiah 2:2,3 - "And it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountain, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, for he shall teach us of His ways and we shall walk in His paths; for out of Zion goes forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem". John the baptizer preached about it - Matthew 3:2, Jesus preached about it - Matthew 4:17; this was the message of the seventy - Luke 10:1,9. Jesus advertised the kingdom in the parables of the mustard seed, the leaven, the pearl of great price, the sower - thus showing its growth and its value. Note the teaching of Jesus on another occasion- Luke 16:16, "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." Jesus promised to build His church, the kingdom (Matthew 16:18,19). Jesus told the people that some would not taste of death until they saw the kingdom come - Mark 9:1. Jesus told the apostles to stay in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came - Acts 1:8. Acts 2 describes this event - Acts 2:1-4. All that had been foretold is now preached as having come to pass. In Acts 2:41 - 3000 baptized. With all the advertising God did, why weren't even more baptized? Jesus is Savior, Lord and King. Let's tell the world. Advertise it! Tell people about God's plan of salvation- Hear, believe, repent, confess, be baptized, be faithful. Extend the invitation of Jesus to all that you meet, let's work together with God!

upon the ungodly who are left behind), and following which He will return to the earth, establish His kingdom and rule in splendor over a material and earthly kingdom. Strange as it may seem, a doctrine not even mentioned by name in the Bible, has upstaged the second coming of Christ in the hearts of multiplied thousands. Few doctrines "excite" the average devotee of Biblical prophecy, as does the modern doctrine of the rapture. The very word "rapture" evokes wild imaginations of sensational happenings calculated to frighten the wicked out of their wits, if not out of their wickedness, and promising the righteous transport somewhere out in the wild blue yonder for a three and one-half to seven year rendezvous with Christ on the proverbial "cloud-nine."

The second coming of Christ is as fundamental to the Christian's faith as His incarnation, His death for the sins of the world, His burial in Joseph's new tomb, and His resurrection from the dead. Ever since the ascension of Christ into heaven, His disciples have anxiously and excitedly looked forward to the day of His return, and for good reason. Being the Son of God and knowing that the time of His departure was at hand, He announced to His chosen few that the time had come (John 14:14). From that moment, throughout the book of Acts, the Epistles, and even in Revelation, the Holy Spirit has promised over and over again that Christ will come again. The Bible-believing Christian truly believes that He will come again, but when, and in what manner He will come is misunderstood by many who profess to be Christians.

When one examines the doctrine of the Rapture by looking at its origin, some of the "prominent" promoters of it, and where they have fallen short, an honest heart can see that it is not a doctrine of Christ. Then when one further examines the Rapture Theory by comparing it with the sacred Scriptures, one can see that it is indeed a doctrine of the devil! The following points shall be discussed to give a better understanding of the Rapture Theory: (1) What is the Rapture? (2) The Origin of the Rapture Theory (3) The Prominent Promoters of the Theory (4) The Rapture Theory Compared to the Bible.

What is The Rapture?

The average Rapture theorist believes that at any given time Jesus Christ will return in the air, in the clouds, for His church. The dead in Christ will instantaneously be shot from their graves, be changed and

transformed, and join the Lord Jesus in the sky. Then those that are alive and remain will be caught up with them in the clouds. They further state that the ensuing confusion and fear will set the stage for a masterful world politician called the antichrist. "He will unite the world into a single, one-world government, establish peace in the Middle East and sign a peace treaty in Israel." They teach that the temple of the Jews will be rebuilt and the Old Testament sacrificial system will be resumed. Still further, they believe that the antichrist will erect a false god in the temple, and insist that he be worshipped. The Jews will refuse, and there will follow a three-and-one-half year period of tribulation such as the world has never seen before or will ever see again. "Near the end of that period, the cataclysmic suffering and world-wide convulsion will intensify beyond imagination as seven bowls of wrath are poured out on the earth."

The advocates of the Rapture Theory believe that Jesus will give signs of His return, some supposedly recorded in Matthew twenty-four. When He does return, it is supposed that He will come quietly and waft His saints away in what is called the "rapture." Some will be working at their jobs on the assembly line, at theft computer posts, plowing their fields, or cleaning house. Whatever they are doing, it will be quietly interrupted; they will just disappear. Loved Ones, associates, friends will miss them and will not know where they have gone. But Jesus will have supposedly taken them out of this world to be with Him for a period of seven years. The dead saints will also be raptured. Some of the graves in the cemeteries will be opened and the bodies gone, but no one will know where or why. The wicked will remain here on the earth (or in the graves) for a period of seven years of great tribulation. The tribulation period will be consummated with a great and terrible war, which will be fought on the battlefield of Armageddon. But Christ will come again (the third appearance) and He will bring the battle to an end. He will establish His kingdom and reign over all the earth from His throne in Jerusalem for one thousand years of peace and prosperity. Then will come the end of the world, the judgment and eternity.

As one can see the whole premillennial doctrine revolves around the Rapture theory. If one can disprove the Rapture theory one can disprove premillennialism. Sadly, most people "do greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures" (Mark 12:24). Many prefer flamboyant error to simple Truth (II Thessalonians 2:10-12).

28:14. Was renewed through Judah - Genesis 49:10. It was also plainly revealed that the Messiah should be of the seed of David: "I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth" (Jeremiah 23:5). Such advertising caused the Jews to know later the exact Image of the Messiah. Balaam told this to King Balak. Note Numbers 24:14-17, "And now, behold, I go unto my people: come therefore, and I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days. And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: He hath said, which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open: I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth." This was advance publicity and advertising concerning the coming of Jesus.

The Death of Jesus was highly advertised.

Isaiah wrote of the Christ in Isaiah 53. Every animal sacrifice pointed toward the great sacrifice when the Christ would offer Himself without blemish as our sin-offering. The Passover lamb was a "type" or "shadow" of the sacrifice of Christ- 1 Corinthians 5:7,8. Both Israel's "sin-offering" and the "scapegoat" (Leviticus 16) typified the Christ, as the law was thus "a schoolmaster bring us to Christ" (Galatians 3:24). Even the brazen serpent which Israel raised up in the wilderness was a type of the Messiah that would come - Numbers 21:8,9; John 3:14. John, the forerunner of Jesus, came preaching of Him — John 1:29. Jesus often foretold His own death — Matthew 12:40; 16:21. The prophets foretold of His resurrection - Psalm 22:14-16. So did Jesus reveal His death and resurrection. In Matthew 27:63 you have the testimony of the Jews to Pilate. The advertising had done its work - the Jews were talking about the death of Jesus and speculating about His possible resurrection.

which we live this should be obvious. The laws that govern our nation are conflicting at best. Take, for example, the question that is being asked by many since the recent school shootings in Colorado. "What has gone wrong with the kids who do those kinds of things?" The answer is not as difficult as some make it seem. We, as a nation, turned our backs on God. We began to rely on the wisdom of man instead of God's divine wisdom. This has greatly affected our conduct and that which we actively teach our children. We now reap the harvest of our wisdom. **Paul Hoover may be contacted at 2863 East High Street, Springfield, on 45505.**

The Greatest Advertising Campaign

PSALM 139:140

By Justin Odom

Millions of advertising dollars are spent each day on television, radio, newspapers, magazines, billboards and other forms of information media. Man is, consciously or unconsciously, influenced every day by the pressure of advertising. God used advertising long before the printing press or electric sign was used by man. God uses the whole of His creation to advertise His majesty and glory. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, night unto night showeth knowledge" (Psalm 19:1,2). God uses the scroll of the limitless sky as a giant billboard to advertise Himself to His creatures on earth. Each falling leaf speaks eloquently of our God - Romans 1:20. Read the 139th Psalm to find the awesome omnipresence of God. Wherever you may look in this life, there will you see that God has revealed Himself, with majestic power in storm and flood. From the petals and stamen of tiny flowers to the intricate and, unique design of an individual snowflake. But we want to look at the greatest advertising campaign God has made.

The coming of Christ was highly advertised.

When man sinned in Eden, God promised a Savior - Genesis 3:15. Promised to Abraham - "In thy seed' shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 22:18); Promised to Jacob - Genesis 21:12;

The Origin Of The Rapture Theory

Pre-Tribulationism was unknown to the early church; in fact, no one has been able to show that this particular doctrine was held by any of the church Fathers or Biblical scholars before the early nineteenth century. Most believe that the theory originated during a time of great revival of interest in Biblical prophecy. In 1830, a young Scottish woman named Margaret McDonald claimed to have received a "revelation" that Christians would be raptured before the Great Tribulation. Shortly after this, the idea spread to London where it aroused much interest. In further "revelations" during this period, dates for the rapture were variously fixed between 1835 and 1847.

Pre-Tribulationism was first taught publicly at a series of prophetic meetings in Powerscourt House, Ireland. Here, Plymouth Brethren organizer John Darby took hold of the idea and made it an essential element of his teachings, giving rise to what is now known as Darbyism, or Dispensationalism. Not all of the Brethren, however, accepted this teaching. It was rejected and opposed by such well-known members as George Mueller and Samuel P. Tregelles (both of whom broke with the Brethren movement because of it). Among other men who opposed this "novel two-phased-second coming" teaching as being un-Scriptural was the Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon. In spite of the opposition of such men, this doctrine crossed denominational lines to spread through England. The greatest growth of this teaching, however, has been in the twentieth century mainly through the Modern Dispensational teachings of the Scofield Reference Bible.

The reader may be interested to know where some of the well-known and influential denominational church leaders and theologians have stood on this issue. As previously stated, in examining the teachings and writings from the first 1900 years of "Christianity", we can find no Pre-Tribulation doctrine, or interpretation of the Scriptures! Consider for a moment some of the people of whom we are speaking: Polycarp, Barnabas, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Charles and John Wesley, Matthew Henry, William Tyndale, John Wycliffe, George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, John Knox, and Charles Finney. While such a list does not, of course, prove or disprove any doctrine, it does illustrate that Pre-Tribulationism is a new doctrine, unknown by the church until the last

The Gospel Plan Of Salvation

Hear

“Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’”
(Acts 2:37)

Believe

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6)

Repent

“Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”” (Acts 2:38)

Confess

“... if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”
(Romans 10:9)

Be Baptized

“And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.’” (Mark 16:15)

Live Faithfully

“Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.”
(Revelation 2:10)

What is wrong with simply having a Miss America pageant recognizing that all races are equal? But we in our “wisdom” try to fight the battle for equal rights by use of segregation.

We live in a society where we are called upon to tolerate anything anyone -wants to do. But those who call for this toleration do not tolerate us if we are not tolerant.

In our society, following “The Wisdom Of The World” in child rearing has lead to confusing and ineffectual laws. If parents discipline a child they run the risk of going to jail. If parents do not discipline a child and that child commits a crime the parents run the risk of going to jail because of the child’s crime. But, when a child is out of control, parents can spend a lot of money to send the child to “boot camp” where the child will receive the discipline that was illegal for parents to administer to begin with.

There is a false god in America. Many people willingly bow down to it. Many others are greatly affected by it even as they struggle against it. This false god, like all of its kind, was created by human beings. The lust, desire and greed of human beings sustain it. This false god’s name is “society.” Many convictions are destroyed; ethics are set aside; morals are diminished; as we try to please “society.” The interesting thing about this false god is that we as individuals comprise “society.” Those who worship “society,” in a sense, worship themselves. In this religion , mankind’s philosophy, science, and abilities are exalted to the level of divine law. However, law is no greater than its author. Can the law of man truly be the measuring rod for right and wrong?

If the will of “society” determines right and wrong, there is no right and wrong. History plainly shows that societies are always changing and the values of one society are not necessarily consistent with that of other societies. If society was the measuring rod of right and wrong, and most of his countrymen were in favor, Hitler was not wrong in persecuting the Jews. If this is the case, why is our country, and others, currently involved in Kosovo? Surely the wisdom of all who are leaders in their particular society must be respected and their decisions upheld; unless, it is the case that the will of particular societies cannot determine right and wrong. If we see that other societies are unable to employ true wisdom as they govern, we ought to see this same flaw in our own society. -

In 1 Corinthians 3:19a, the apostle Paul wrote, “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.” When we look at the society in

us see the picture the wise man draws before us of the disgusting ugliness of the drunkard: "Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go in to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder" (Proverbs 23:29-32).

Though it is not easy, there is hope for those who want to change! There is a power strong enough to change a drunkard to a sober man! (Romans 1:16) It has been proven to work many times! On my trip to Russia in April, I studied with a man who had a drinking problem. I taught him that he MUST quit drinking before he could become a New Testament Christian. This man realized that he was in sin, separated from God and righteous people, and lost. He was willing to quit drinking and become a Christian. In obedience to the Gospel, he put off the old practice of drunkenness and the guilt of sin. He became a Christian May 8, 1999. He came into the church of Christ where he could find peace, strength, and encouragement. This advice was taken by those at Corinth who wanted to change, and it worked for them! (1 Cor. 6:9-11). It can likewise work for you. **Fred Davis may be contacted at P.O. Box 320, Markie, IN 46770**

The Wisdom Of The World

By Paul Hoover, Editor

We live in a society which is consumed with pursuing comfort. We spend untold amounts of money as we seek to reduce physical labor as much as possible. We buy riding lawnmowers so we won't have to walk while mowing our lawn. We buy four-wheelers so we don't have to walk into the woods to hunt. We have remote control on everything possible so we don't have to get up any more than possible. Then we turn around and spend more money on exercise equipment so we can be healthy. That is kind of funny if you think about it. After all; we may not need all of the exercise equipment we buy if we did not buy all of the comforts that eliminate exercise to begin with.

We live in a society that still cannot get a handle on equal rights when it comes to the races. We can have a Miss Black America beauty pageant, yet a Miss White America beauty contest is illegal.

century. It further shows that this doctrine has not had universal acceptance. If Christ did not teach it; if the apostles did not teach it; if the first-century church did not believe it; what would make one think that it is Bible doctrine?

Prominent Promoters

Over the years there have been many who have set dates on which the Rapture was to take place. It is a matter of historical record that a William U. Miller predicted that Jesus would come in 1843. When it did not happen, he figured again and said he had missed it a year, that Christ would come in 1844. His followers robed themselves in white sheets and climbed up in the trees to wait for Him. But He did not come. Another man, by the name of Charles T. Russell set the date of the Rapture for October, 1914, but he too miscalculated and reset it in 1915. Some believe and teach that He did come in 1914, but He came quietly and invisibly and was witnessed only by the faithful of that small sect. That same cult revised its teaching and set October 1, 1975 as the day. When Christ did not come that day, many of the adherents were disillusioned and left the sect.

Since the formation of the State of Israel in 1948, many others have predicted that the Rapture will occur within the present generation. Among the more notables have been Hal Lindsey, Herbert W. Armstrong and Jack Van Impe. Each of them has his own theory, but, generally speaking, the idea is that at His incarnation, Christ came to establish His kingdom on the earth but was defeated in that mission by unexpected rejection by the Jewish nation. But so as not to be completely defeated, He established the church as sort of a substitute, stop-gap arrangement and promised to return to set up the kingdom. For the last century and a half, there has been countless number of people predicting the date of the Lord's return. Millions of dollars have been spent to purchase books written by some of the date-setters. Especially, as the world nears the end of the century, is the speculation concerning Christ's return running rampant. But what does the Bible say concerning the coming of Christ?

The Rapture Theory Compared To The Bible

The Rapture theorist seeks support for the “catching away” of the saints in I Thessalonians 4:15-17. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall, rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. This passage, however, deals with the final return of Christ, when the saints will indeed be “caught away” from the earth but FOREVERMORE, and not for only seven years. Neither here, nor elsewhere in the Bible, is there the faintest suggestion of a secret or public rapture of seven years. In fact, the Thessalonian Scriptures conclusively prove that the Lord will never actually put his foot on this earth again; his appearing will be on the clouds from which He will call the saints away from the earth!

Further, there will be no earth here from the time of catching away of the saints since this earth, following that event; will perish in the fires of the Last Great Day. The “new heaven and earth” to which the saints will be carried is identified in John 14:2 as that place where our Lord now is preparing “a place” for the saints and to which He will take them at the end of the age.

One of the main tenets of the Rapture theory is the idea that when Christ comes it will be a secret coming, in which He will catch away from the earth the resurrected bodies of those who have died in the faith. According to Revelation 1:7, however, every eye will see the Lord when He comes. Even the wicked ones who pierced the side of Jesus will see Him at His return. There will be nothing secret about this matter. It will not be a quiet rapture either. There will be a great noise, flaming fire and the sound like a trumpet to accompany the Lord’s coming (2 Peter 3:10; 1 Thessalonians 4, and 2 Thessalonians 1:4-10).

The sharp contrast, which exists, between the Premillennial theory and the clear, decisive teaching of the Scriptures is easily seen in paralleling the two positions. The Premillennial view says: (1) Christ is not now reigning. The Scriptures teach that Christ is now reigning. “For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet” (1 Corinthians 15:25). The Premillennial view says: (2) Christ will begin His reign at His return. The Scriptures teach that Christ will end His

and other dangerous drugs.”

The scourge of all the centuries has been strong drink. I am sure that it has plagued more hearts, blasted more homes and wrecked more lives than all the wars we have fought in American history.

Alcoholism is a sin and a real threat to our nation. But like many other sins in our day, it is tolerated, glorified, ignored, apologized for, and encouraged: but it is still sin! Statistics say 71% of all American adults drink and that more than 50% are alcoholics! It has proven itself to bring heartache and destruction to multitudes of men, women, and children. “...Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God” (I Corinthians 6:9-10). Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditious, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before (or forewarn), as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21).

Even those who attempt to uphold “social drinking” need to know that they destroy as many as 10,000 brain cells at one time! In our nation, it seems almost every grocery cart is loaded with some form of alcoholic beverages! Our TV sets daily glorifies this sin. Beer, wine, and liquor advertisers taunt it as being among the finest of hospitable graces. But they never show the results of indulgence in the loss of jobs and family, nor the degeneracy it brings! Yes, they know about the horrid results and even give light lip service in advertising some warnings about “drinking responsibly.” They know that it is responsible for 50% of the auto accidents, a large number of divorces, and the ruin physically, spiritually, and eternally of the individual who consumes it! They know that our prisons are bulging at the seams from crimes committed “under the influence” of strong drink! BUT, THE MONEY IS TOO GOOD!

Since “Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14:34), we wonder how long our nation can stand! Let each of us determine to put away sin ourselves and help others by teaching the same! We should not be surprised that “Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous there is favor” (Proverbs 14:9) Let it be known that “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise” (Proverbs 20:1). And let

'We have sinned against the LORD; we will go up and fight, just as the LORD our God commanded us.' And when every one of you had girded on his weapons of war, you were ready to go up into the mountain. And the LORD said to me, 'Tell them, "Do not go up nor fight, for I am not among you; lest you be defeated before your enemies.'" So I spoke to you; yet you would not listen, but rebelled against the command of the LORD, and presumptuously went up into the mountain" (Deuteronomy 1:41-43, emph. mine-MRT). What a mess when we don't listen to God!

This series of events teaches a great lesson. If men wish to have God's blessing, they must first have God's APPROVAL! "Presuming" we know God's will can be as dangerous as flatly rejecting it. When we presume, we are merely seeking to do our own will. There are many who presume they are doing the Lord's will today. Jesus warned of this, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). But Christians can know whether they are doing God's will if they search His word for it, and commit themselves to apply it! Then, ask God to help you personally by providing opportunities for you to apply His will (Philippians 2:13)! Remember, there is a way to be sure the Lord is with you, and that is to be sure you are with Him!

"Righteousness Exalteth"

By Fred Davis

Not very long ago, the greatest historian of our time, Arnold Toynbee, was asked to comment on what he believed to be the fate of America. He responded: "Only this, that is looks now as if the number one enemy of the American way of life is drunkenness. If your people continue the present increase of drunkenness, nothing can save you from destruction. History is altogether against you."

Albert Schweitzer, famed theologian, doctor, missionary, and musician said: "Drink is commercially our greatest waste; Socially it is our greatest criminal; Morally and religiously it is our greatest enemy". Dr. Dwight L. Wilburn, the President of the American Medical Association adds; "If alcoholic beverages were invented today, they would be outlawed just as this nation has outlawed marijuana, LSD,

reign at His return. "And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:28). The Premillennial view says: (3) Christ will establish a kingdom at His return. The Scriptures teach that Christ's kingdom will terminate at His return. "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power."

The actual events of the last day, and their order also disprove the Rapture theory. (1) The dead, both righteous and wicked, will be raised. "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation (John 5:28-29). (2) The judgment will follow (Revelation 20:12-15). (3) The saints will be carried to heaven, the wicked sent to hell (Matthew 25:41-46). (4) Christ will give up His kingdom to God (1 Corinthians 15:24). (5) The earth will disappear in the all-consuming fires of the judgment of God upon the wicked world. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10).

Conclusion

The hope of Christ's coming to receive His own to glory inspires the Christian to live for Him each day. The things of this temporal world become less and less important in view of the great truth of the eternal home in heaven. Such a hope takes away many of the tears on the death of a loved one who is a Christian too, When one stands beside the open grave of a deceased Christian, one can have hope that at the return of the Lord, these remains will be changed into a glorious body, and taken into the celestial city to live with God, Christ, and all the redeemed forever.

In Defense Of Christ's Deity

Part 1 of 2

By Bert Thompson

On Tuesday prior to the Lord's crucifixion the following Friday, Jesus engaged in a discussion with the Pharisees, who made no secret of their hatred for Him. When Matthew recorded the scene in his Gospel, he first commented on an earlier skirmish the Lord had with the Sadducees: "But the Pharisees, when they heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, gathered themselves together" (22:34). Jesus—with penetrating logic and an incomparable knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures—had routed the Sadducees completely. No doubt the Pharisees thought they could do better. Yet they were about to endure the same embarrassing treatment.

In the midst of His discussion with the Pharisees, Jesus asked: "What think ye of the Christ? Whose son is he?" (Matthew 22:42). They were unable to answer the questions satisfactorily because their hypocrisy prevented them from comprehending both Jesus' nature and His mission. The questions the Lord asked on that day, however, are ones that every rational, sane person must answer eventually. The two questions were intended to raise the matter of Christ's deity. The answers—had the Pharisees' spiritual myopia not prevented them from responding correctly—were intended to confirm it. Today, these questions still raise the spectre of Christ's identity. Who is Christ? is He, as He claimed to be, the Son of God? Was He, as many around Him claimed, God incarnate? Is He, as the word "deity" implies, of divine nature and rank?

Christ As A Historical Figure

The series of events that would lead to Jesus' becoming the world's best known historical figure was to begin in first-century Palestine. There are four primary indicators of this fact. First, when Daniel was asked by king Nebuchadnezzar to interpret his wildly imaginative dream, Daniel revealed that God would establish the Messianic kingdom during the time of the Roman Empire (viz., the fourth kingdom represented in the king's dream; see Daniel 2:24-45). Roman domination of Palestine began in 63 B.C., and continued until A.D. 476. Second, the Christ was promised to come before "the

A Plea

All of this compels us to plead with all of God's enemies to "Be ye reconciled unto God" (See 2 Corinthians 5:19-21). Are you the enemy of God? Will you be reconciled? The cross is the only way, and if you make Christ's death upon the cross your death by baptism, you will be among the reconciled, the one body, the church of our Lord. Will you do that today? Will you not respond to God's plea for you to become his friend again?—**Tom MeLeniore may be contacted at 338 Lake Harbour Drive, Ridgeland, Mississippi 39157 and tmdydimus@juno.com**

Another Lesson From "The Wilderness"

Are You "Presumptuous?"

(Deuteronomy 1:43)

By Matt Thomas

Jesus said, "If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is of God or whether I speak on my own authority" (John 7:17). According to Jesus, one way to be sure you are doing God's will is to "will" yourself to know God's will. Jesus encouraged men to seek God's will, and promises that it can be known. How? God has revealed His will to us and today we have it in written form – the Bible. So when we want to do God's will, we must first check God's word! Attempting to please God without first consulting Him is "presumptuous!"

Many times sin is committed when one knowingly rejects God's will. But there are times when sin is committed by presuming we know God's will, when we do not! In Deuteronomy 1, Moses reminds Israel that they committed both of these sins (rejection and presumption), when they faced the task of conquering Canaan. First, they rejected God's will to invade Canaan by choosing to believe God would not be with them, though He was with them (Deuteronomy 1:30). This show of faithlessness did cause God to turn away from Israel. Second, when the congregation saw this, they sought to correct their error and arrayed themselves for battle, to invade Canaan. But the Lord was not with them. The irony is, now Israel presumed God was with them when He was not! Moses said, "Then you answered and said to me,

baptism). The RESULT is the church, i.e., being in the body of the reconciled. There are none who have been reconciled to God who are not in the church, and since this is true, there are none outside the church who have been reconciled to God. The only way NOT to be in the church is NOT to be reconciled unto God. This is why there *can be* and *is* only one body/church (Ephesians 4:4).

This coincides with various other New Testament teachings about the church. According to Acts 2:47, the church is the saved. To be in the church means precisely to be among the saved. Thus, it is necessarily true that to be among the - saved means to be in the church. There are none saved who are not in the church, and there are none outside the church who have been saved. According to Acts 20:28, the church is made up of those purchased of God by his Son's blood. To be in the church means to be among the purchased. Thus, it is necessarily true that to have been purchased by God is to be in the church. There are none who belong to God who *are* not in the church, and there are none outside the church who belong to God. According to Acts 20:32, the church is the sanctified. To be in the church means to be among the sanctified. To be among the sanctified is to be in the church. There are none sanctified who are not in the church, and there are none outside the church who are sanctified. And according to Hebrews 12:23, the church is those who are firstborn, whose names are enrolled in heaven. To be enrolled in heaven is to be in the church. To be in the church is to be enrolled in heaven. There are none enrolled in heaven who are not in the church, and there are none outside the church who are enrolled in heaven. All of this corresponds to what is said about the church in Ephesians 5:23: "For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior." It is essential to understand what is meant by Christ's being the savior of the body. It is not a matter of "Get into the church and then when Christ saves the body he will save you." What is being said is this: "Those who are in the body are there as the result of Christ's having saved them." *There is not a one of those whom Christ has saved who are not in his church.* All of this teaching has implications. There can be no such thing as *choosing* the church; there can be no *joining* the church. And there can be no becoming a Christian and then forgetting about, ignoring, being aloof from, not participating with, not meeting faithfully with, the body which is the church!

scepter" departed from Judah (Genesis 49:10). Bible students recognize that this prophecy has reference to the Messiah ("Shiloh") arriving before the Jews lost their national sovereignty and judicial power (the "scepter" of Genesis 49). Thus, Christ had to have come prior to the Jews' losing their power to execute capital punishment (John 18:31). When Rome deposed Archelaus in A.D. 6, Coponius was installed as Judea's first procurator. Interestingly "the... procurator held the power of jurisdiction with regard to capital punishment" (Solomon, 1972, 13:117). Hence, Christ was predicted to come sometime prior to A.D. 6 (see also McDowell, 1972, pp. 176-178). Third, Daniel predicted that the Messiah would bring an end to "sacrifice and offering" before the destruction of Jerusalem (cf. Daniel 9:24-27 and Matthew 24:15; see also Jackson, 1997). History records that the Temple was obliterated by Rome in A.D. 70. Fourth, the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem of Judea (Micah 5:2). It also is a matter of record that Jesus was born in Bethlehem while Palestine was under Roman rule, before Judah lost her judicial power, and before the destruction of Jerusalem (see also Matthew 2:3-6; Luke 2:2-6).

Christ In The Old Testament

The Old and New testaments portray a portrait of Christ that presents valuable evidence for the person desiring to answer the questions, "What think ye of the Christ?," and "Whose son is he?" In Isaiah 7:14, for example, the prophet declared that a virgin would conceive, bear a son, and name him "Immanuel," which means "God with us" (a prophecy that was fulfilled in the birth of Christ, Matthew 1:22-23). Later Isaiah referred to this son as "Mighty God" (9:6) In fact, in the year that king Uzziah died, Isaiah said he saw "the Lord" sitting upon a throne (see Isaiah 6:1ff). Overpowered by the scene, God's servant - exclaimed: "Woe is me... for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts" (6:5). In the New Testament, John wrote: "These things said Isaiah because he saw His [Christ's] glory, and he spake of him" (John 12:41).

Isaiah urged God's people to sanctify "Jehovah of hosts" (8:12-14), a command applied to Jesus by Peter (1 Peter 3:14-15). Furthermore, Isaiah's "Jehovah" was to become a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense (8:14), a description that New Testament writers applied to

Christ (cf. Romans 9:33, 1 Peter 2:8). Isaiah foretold that John the Baptizer would prepare the way for the coming of **Jehovah** (40:3). It is well known that John was the forerunner of Christ (cf. Matthew 3:3, John 1.23).

Isaiah pictured Christ not only as a silent “lamb” (53:7), but as a man Who “a bruised reed will he not break, and a dimly burning wick will he not quench” (42:3; cf. Matthew 12:20). J.W. McGarvey explained the imagery in these verses as follows: A bruised reed, barely strong enough to stand erect...a smoking flax (a lamp wick), its flame extinguished and its fire almost gone, fitly represent the sick, and lame, and blind who were brought to Jesus to be healed...he would heal their bruises and fan their dying energies into a flame (1875, p. 106).

Other Old Testament writers illuminated Christ in their writings as well. The psalmist suggested He would be known as zealous for righteousness (Psalm 69:9), that He would be hated without cause (Psalm 22), and that He would triumph over death (Psalm 16:8-11). Daniel referred to His coming kingdom as one that would “stand forever” (12:44). The prophets’ portrait of Christ was intended not only to foreshadow His coming, but to make Him all the more visible to the people in New Testament times as well.

Christ In The New Testament

The New Testament is equally explicit in its commentary regarding the Christ, and offers extensive corroboration of the Old Testament declarations concerning Him. The prophets had portrayed the Messiah’s demise as unjust, painful, and vicarious (Isaiah 53:4-6; Psalm 22). In the New Testament, Paul reiterated that fact (Romans 5:6-8). The prophets predicted that He would be betrayed by a friend (Psalm 41:9) for a mere thirty pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12), and He was (Luke 22:47-48; Matthew 26:15). They said that He would be mocked (Psalm 22:7-8), spat upon (Isaiah 50:6), numbered among common criminals (Isaiah 53:12), pierced through (Zechariah 12:10), and forsaken by God (cf. Psalm 22:1), and He was (Luke 23:35; Matthew 26:67; Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:27-28; John 19:37; John 20:25; Mark 15:34). Without any explanation, an inspired prophet predicted that the suffering servant’s hands and feet would be pierced (Psalm 22:16). Later revelation reveals the reason for such a

By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For he who has died is freed from sin” (Romans. 6:1-7). When Christ’s reconciling death becomes our death in baptism, then is accomplished in each person’s case what Paul described in Romans 5:1: “Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” And it does not end there. It makes eternal salvation possible for God’s friends, as Paul wrote in Romans 5:10, 11: “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. Not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received our reconciliation.”

Those Reconciled By The Cross An In One Body

Many, especially today, are under the notion that they can be saved by Christ and yet have no relationship to the church. According to our text, a *dichotomy between the cross and the church is impossible*. What is the one body? The church. “[A]nd he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all” (Ephesians 1:22, 23).

Ekklesia, the word translated church, means “assembly, congregation.” The church is a body of *people*... *Christ’s* body made up of *his* people. It is very important to realize that the church is not a concept, an institution, an abstract entity, but a group of PEOPLE, a *particular* group of people, viz., *those who have been reconciled to God... the body of the reconciled*. To be “in the church” means precisely to be “among those who have been reconciled,” and to be among those who have been reconciled means precisely to be “in the church.” The death of Christ on the cross is the CAUSE of being reconciled (for those who have made that death their own death in

Saved By The Cross...Saved In The Church

By Tom McLemore

Reconciliation

Reconciliation refers to “making friends again.” As worldly, ungodly, and sinners, we were (and many still are) God’s *enemies* (Romans 5:6, 8, 10). And James described the enmity in these words: “Unfaithful creatures! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (James 4:4). Enemies need reconciliation to God, because God’s enemies are subject to his wrath!

Those Reconciled Are Reconciled By The Cross

How is this reconciliation accomplished? The good news of reconciliation is declared by Paul: As Paul wrote, “While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Why, one will hardly die for a righteous man –though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. .But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. Not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received our reconciliation” (Romans 5:6-11). He further wrote, “And you, who once were estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him...” (Colossians 1:21, 22).

But is everyone reconciled, simply because Jesus died? Or is there something *I must do* for Christ’s reconciling death to *reconcile me personally* unto God? Yes. His death must become *my death*. How? In baptism as a penitent believer in Christ. Hear Paul: “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?”

statement: He was nailed to a cross (Luke 23:33). The prophets had said that He would be raised from the dead so that He could sit upon the throne of David (Isaiah 9:7). This occurred, as Peter attested in his sermon on Pentecost following the resurrection (Acts 2:30). He would rule, not Judah, but the most powerful kingdom on Earth. As King, Christ was to rule (from heaven) the kingdom that “shall never be destroyed” and that “shall break in pieces and consume all these [earthly] kingdoms, and... shall stand forever” (Daniel 2:44). The New Testament establishes the legitimacy of His kingdom (Colossians 1:13; 1 Corinthians 15:24-5). The subjects of this royal realm were to be from every nation on Earth (Isaiah 2:2), and were prophesied to enjoy a life of peace and harmony that ignores any and all human distinctions, prejudices, or biases (cf. Isaiah 2:4, Galatians 3:28). This King would be arrayed, not in the regal purple of a carnal king, but in the humble garments of a holy priest (Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 5:6). Like Melchizedek, the Messiah was to be both Priest and King (Genesis 14:18), guaranteeing that His subjects could approach God without the interference of a clergy class. Instead, as the New Testament affirms, Christians offer their petitions directly to God through their King–Who mediates on their behalf (of. Matthew 6:9; John 14:13-14; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 10:12,19-22). It would be impossible for the New Testament writers to provide any clearer answers than they did to the questions that Christ asked the Pharisees.

Christ As A Man

The Scriptures teach that Jesus possessed two natures–divine and human. As an eternal Being (Isaiah 9:6; Micah 5:2; John 1:1ff.), He was God; yet, He became man (1 Timothy 2:5), made in the likeness of sinful flesh (Romans 8:3), though without sin (Hebrews 4:15). Isaiah observed that Christ would be “a man of **sorrows**, and acquainted with grief, “Who would **grow up**”... as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground” (Isaiah 53:2-3).

As a human, the prophets had said, Christ was to be the seed of woman (Genesis 3:15), and a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David (Genesis 22:18; 26:4; 28:14; 2 Samuel 7:12-13). The New Testament confirms that He was born of a woman (Galatians 4:4) who was a virgin (Matthew 1:23), and that He was the descendant of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David (Matthew 1:1ff). The apostle John stated that He had become flesh and had dwelt among men

(John 1:14). Paul wrote that Christ was recognized “in fashion as a man” (Philippians 2:7-8). From his position as a physician, Luke wrote that Christ “advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52). He was able to learn (Hebrews 5:8). He experienced hunger (Matthew 4:2), thirst (John 19:28), weariness (John 4:6), anger (Mark 3:5), frustration (Mark 9:19), joy (John 15:11), sadness (John 11:35), and grief (Luke 19:41; Hebrews 5:7). He was “in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). But most significantly, He was able to die (Mark 15:44). In every respect, He was as human as you and I, which is why He could, and did, refer to Himself as the “Son of Man” (see Matthew 1:20; 9:6; et al.).

But the impact He had on the world was not due to His physical appearance. In fact, Isaiah foretold that He would have “. . . no form nor comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him” (Isaiah 53:2). Rather, it was His nature and His character that made Him so intriguing, so commanding a figure, and so worthy of honor, respect, and worship. Here we see a man—but no mere man, for He is the only man who was virgin-born (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18), and upon whom the inspired prophets dared to apply the revered name of “Jehovah” (Isaiah 40:3).

Why do the Scriptures place importance upon the **human** nature of Christ? Wayne Jackson has suggested: if Christ had not become a man, He could not have died. Deity as pure Spirit-essence, possesses **immortality** (1 Tim. 6:16—the Greek word denotes deathlessness). The writer of Hebrews makes it wonderfully plain that Christ partook of “flesh and blood” that “through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14). If Christ had not died, there would have been no atonement, no forgiveness of sins—the human family would have been hopelessly lost forever! Thank God for Christ’s humanity (1979, p. 66, emp. in orig.).

Christ As God

The Scriptures do not speak of Christ as **just** a man, however. They also acknowledge His divine nature. In most of its occurrences, “Jehovah” is applied to the first person of the Godhead (i.e., the Father—Matthew 28:19). For example: “Jehovah said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool” (Psalm 110:1). Jesus later explained that this verse pictures the

Father addressing the Christ (Luke 20:42).

Yet the name “Jehovah” also is used on occasion to refer to Christ. For example, Isaiah prophesied concerning the mission of John the Baptizer: “The voice of one that crieth, Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of Jehovah; make level in the desert a highway for our God” (Isaiah 40:3; cf. Matthew 3:3, Mark 1:3, Luke 3:4). John was sent to prepare the way for Jesus Christ (John 1:29-34). But Isaiah said that John would prepare the way of Jehovah. Clearly Jesus and **Jehovah** the are same.

The writer of Hebrews quoted the Father as addressing His Son in this way: “Thou, Lord (Jehovah—Psalm 102: 25), in the beginning did lay the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of hands” (Hebrews 1:10). Not only does this verse apply the word “Jehovah” to Jesus, but it actually attributes the quotation **to the mouth of God**. Again, Jesus and Jehovah are used synonymously. Furthermore, Jesus spoke and acted like God. He affirmed that He was “one” with the Father (John 10:30). He forgave sins—a prerogative of God alone (Mark 2:5,7). He accepted the worship of men (John 9:38) which is due only to God (Matthew 4:10), and which good angels (Revelation 22:8-9) and good men (Matthew 4:10) refuse.

In addition, Jesus is plainly called “God” a number of times within the New Testament. In John 1:1, regarding Him Who became flesh and dwelt among men (1:14), the Bible says: “.... the Word was God...” And in John 20:28, one of the disciples, Thomas, upon being confronted with empirical evidence for the Lord’s resurrection, proclaimed: “My Lord and my God!” Significantly, and appropriately, Christ accepted the designation. Additional passages that reveal Christ as God include Philippians 2:5ff, 2 Corinthians 4:4, Colossians 1:15, and many others. **Bert Thompson may be contacted at 1-800-2344558.**

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