

Wisdom & Power

September/October, 2007

Vol. 12 - No. 10

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Wisdom & Power

is published 6 times per year by Church of the Open Bible, 440 W. LaVerne Ave., Pomona, CA 91767

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Wisdom & Power is mailed free to all who request it. We send it with the prayerful desire to help establish and strengthen people in the hope of the kingdom of God and the reign of Messiah Jesus, as found in the Abrahamic Faith.

We hope each issue gives you something to think about, laugh over, pray on, and pass around.

Readers are urged to submit articles for publication. We can't guarantee that they will be used, however.

We gladly receive mail. Tell us what you think of the magazine.

Bulk subscriptions are available to churches and study groups.

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Printed by Mike and the crew at Performance Printing, LaVerne, CA

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On the Cover: This is just one of the countless beautiful scenes found at the foot of the Bavarian Alps. It was taken by Chuck Jones on his trip this summer.

First Words

I am continually amazed at the many ministries that are springing up all over the country. The radio ministry of Dale Swartz. Thrive Ministries headed up by Kent and Cheryl Ross. Vince Finnegan's ministry of teaching and publishing. I've heard of plans for the Mid America Ministry School. Gary Turner is putting a monthly magazine together that looks good. Steve Taylor, pastor of the Lake Shore Bible Church in Tempe Az, puts out a daily devotional message and has a blog. The Byte Show web site is attracting many people world wide, and Wally Winner's new publication, "Dot-to Dot Prophecy".

I certainly don't want to overlook the efforts that have been on going. Such as Atlanta Bible College, Rock River Christian College, and Anthony Buzzard's web site and his tireless work. And there are many that I've not been introduced to but God knows them and their work.

I believe that when a need, or void arises, God is fully capable of raising men and women to accomplish the task that is needed. I praise Him for what I see Him doing in our day with faithful, hard working individuals.

While we are on that subject, the men and women who have faithfully served congregation in leadership and support positions should not go unnoticed. October is "Pastor Appreciation Month" which is worthwhile to observe. I would suggest that time also be made for a show of appreciation for all who work in the congregation. The office secretary, the Sunday school teachers, youth leaders. Anyone who faithfully preforms a duty. If you give it some prayerful consideration, I'm sure you will come up with a list of honorable people to say "Thanks" and show appreciation to as well.

Getting back to my first thought, this day we are in is amazing because of the computer and internet. The ability to reach around the world in an instant is

well worth taking advantage of. The ability to make CDs and DVDs is likewise valuable. The capabilities we have now are almost overwhelming.

On our recent trip to Germany, I was reminded of how the printing press had changed so many lives. I wonder what the Apostle Paul (or Luke) would have done with such technology? Our present day affords us with unbelievable opportunities. How much more can we do if we fully take advantage of them?

As this issue of *Wisdom & Power* is being prepared, I can't help but think this is so much 'old school'. Ink on paper, mailed to homes. However it is working. My next goal is to have the back issues on the internet so people around the world can take advantage of this publication, and be blessed by this effort.

Pray for those who serve where you serve. Expand your prayer list to include those who are a ways off that are working to spread the gospel of the kingdom.

This issue contains a historical document from Germany. I thought it would be interesting for you to see the struggle that has gone on before.

Jim Mattison has shared a report from the African Mission trip. Vince Finnegan and Brian Atra also have articles that are always insightful.

We have another article written by Norman McLeod, many years ago, but still relevant. There are some lighter items that may make you smile.

I want to thank everyone who has sent in addresses of new readers. It is great to know that this magazine is worthy of your consideration.

Be blessed as you read on,

Chuck Jones

What About Now?

Part Two: The New Covenant

by Mark Clarke

Editors note: This is the second of a two part article talking about the present reality of the kingdom of God.

In part one, we discussed how a foretaste of the Kingdom of God could be experienced in this life, while we look forward to the complete fulfillment of the prophecies when Christ returns. Among the prophecies to be fulfilled, of which we can experience a foretaste, is the New Covenant which God promised to Israel.

Jesus is called the mediator of the New Covenant (Hebrews 12:24) and of the New Testament (Hebrews 9:15). Both English words, “covenant” and “testament,” mean the same thing and are translated from the same Greek word, *diatheke*. A covenant is an agreement made between two parties. There are a number of covenants mentioned in the Bible, including the one God made with Abraham, which included land, progeny, and abundant blessings. Yet there was still the issue of man’s sin to be dealt with. The Old Covenant mentioned in Hebrews refers to the Law of Moses and is contrasted with the New Covenant established by Jesus Christ. The Mosaic Law included a sacrificial system that was a temporary “stand-in” which foreshadowed and pointed to the ultimate sacrifice of

the Lamb of God.

“For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance” (Hebrews 9:15).

That word “eternal” is the Greek word *aionios*, which means “belonging to the Age to Come.” In order to receive the inheritance of the coming age, man’s sin had to be dealt with. Because God is perfectly righteous and holy, no one who is unrighteous can inherit His Kingdom. Psalm 15:2 says that only he that walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart shall abide in the Lord’s tabernacle. Paul in his epistles enumerates several sinful practices, saying that they who continue in them would not inherit the Kingdom of God (I Cor. 6:9-10; 15:50; Gal. 5:21).

The temporary solution for the children of Israel was a system of sacrifices and offerings which pointed toward the ultimate sacrifice which the coming redeemer would fulfill, and which would establish a new covenant. Hebrews 10 refers to the Law being a shadow of good things to come. The blood of bulls and goats could not take away sins, but the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ could.

But He, having offered one

sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until his enemies be made a footstool for his feet. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying, “this is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put my laws upon their heart, and on their mind I will write them,” he then says, “and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin. Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water (Hebrews 10:12-22).

Through Jesus Christ’s perfect sacrifice we have forgiveness of sins and access to God. The Old Covenant provided a temporary covering for sins, but the problem was that it could not change peoples’ hearts. In addition, even with the great miracles and wonders that God did for His people, the Israelites still did not keep the

covenant, because the human heart is “desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9). God foretold of a New Covenant, however. This is discussed in Hebrews 8.

“But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. For finding fault with them, He says, ‘behold, days are coming, says the Lord, when I will effect a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in my covenant, and I did not care for them, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen, and everyone his brother, saying, ‘know the Lord,’ for all will know me, from the least to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.”

When He said, “A new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear” (Hebrews 8:6-13).

The references to the New Covenant in Hebrews 10:16 and 8:10 are quoting from Jeremiah. Isaiah also mentions this new covenant that God would make, in which He would put His Word into their hearts and His spirit and words would not depart from them.

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house

of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’

“I covenant with you to give you a kingdom, as my Father has covenanted with me.”

for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”(Jeremiah 31:31-34)

“As for Me, this is My covenant with them,” says the LORD: “My Spirit which is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your offspring, nor from the mouth of your offspring’s offspring,” says the LORD, “from now and forever”(Isaiah 59:21).

God’s words and His spirit are often linked together in the Scriptures. God promised Israel that His words and His spirit would be put in them, and they would know Him, and would not depart

from Him. This promise will come to pass in its fullness in the Kingdom of God which is to come. Jesus said the reason he was sent was to preach that Kingdom (Luke 4:43). In addition to preaching it, though, he also ratified the New Covenant which had been foretold by the Prophets. At the Last Supper, when he instituted Communion for a remembrance of what he would accomplish, he said it was the blood of the New Testament, or Covenant. He stated the purpose of the New Covenant a few verses later, in Luke 22:29, when he said, “...just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” The word for “grant” is *diatithemai*, which is the root of *diatheke*, the word for “Covenant.” He was literally saying, “I covenant with you to give you a kingdom, as my Father has covenanted with me.”

The New Covenant which Jesus ratified with his blood was for the purpose of redeeming the sins of mankind, so that “those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.” (Hebrews 9:15, above). The payment for sins was more than just a way for us not to feel guilty in this life. It was the “price of admission” into that future Kingdom, which we could not pay on our own. In addition, the Prophets spoke of a coming time when God would put His words in His people’s hearts, and all would know God, and walk in His ways, which will characterize the Kingdom of God. Obviously that has not happened yet. Neither has Jesus established his Kingdom and begun to rule the world and subdue the kingdoms of the world. These are all things that will happen in the future. Yet, Hebrews tells us that the New Covenant was established by the shed blood of

Jesus. Just as the Kingdom is present in a hidden “seed” form, as discussed in the previous article, so the New Covenant has a partial fulfillment now.

Jeremiah had said that in those days God would make a New Covenant and put His Law in their inward parts and write it on their hearts. Similarly, Isaiah had said that the covenant would involve putting His spirit upon them and His words in their mouth. In addition, two other passages from the Prophets refer to God’s promise to pour out His spirit on His people, although they don’t specifically use the word “covenant.”

“Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God” (Ezekiel 36:25-27).

“It will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions. Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, Blood, fire and columns of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes”(Joel 2:28-31).

We know that the complete fulfillment of the New Covenant has not come to pass yet, since not everyone knows God the way Jeremiah said they would. Yet the

prophecy in Joel is specifically cited in Acts 2:16ff, when the outpouring of the holy spirit on Pentecost took place. It obviously was not a complete fulfillment of that prophecy, since it refers to signs in the heavens, the sun being darkened and the moon turned to blood, etc., and we haven’t seen those things come to pass. Some have suggested that when Peter said “This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel” it actually means “This is *like* that...” But there is nothing in the Greek to indicate such a meaning. The prophecy from Joel is specifically identified with the outpouring of the holy spirit on Pentecost.

The “last days” does not only

“We are now in a time when the Kingdom is present in a hidden sense, and the prophecies are partially fulfilled.”

refer to the time immediately before the return of Christ. Hebrews 1:2 refers to “these last days” and I John 2:18 tells us that it is “the last time.” We have been in the last days ever since Christ’s first coming. We are now in a time when the Kingdom is present in a hidden sense, and the prophecies are partially fulfilled. The holy spirit is said to be an “earnest,” or a foretaste, of what is to come.

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory (Ephesians 1:13-14).

Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge (II Corinthians 1:21-22).

Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge (II Corinthians 5:5). The holy spirit is called a “pledge” of our inheritance. It literally means a “down payment” of that which will be poured out when Christ returns. Not only can we taste of the heavenly gift and the powers of the world to come, but Hebrews 6:4-5 also refers to those who “...have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come.” The holy spirit we have now is a partial fulfillment of God’s promise to put His Word into His people’s hearts and cleanse them, and cause them to walk in His ways. This enables us to experience a foretaste of the Kingdom’s nature and power.

Because of the holy spirit, we are said to be “new creatures” (II Corinthians 5:17) and are encouraged to walk in “newness of life” (Romans 6:4). Paul describes in Romans 7 the problem of trying to do God’s will, while having sinful flesh. The answer, according to Romans 8, is to walk by the spirit. While we don’t yet see the world transformed by the pouring out of God’s spirit, each of us as individuals can experience such a transformation in a limited way, and will be completely transformed when we are raised from the dead at the return of Christ.

We partake of the New Covenant in a partial way now, as a foretaste of the complete fulfillment which is to come. ☪

You can visit Mark’s website, at www.godskingdomfirst.net

The Twelve Articles of the Peasants

The twelve Articles drafted by the Swabian peasants, March 1525, is the best known manifesto of the Peasants' War of 1524-1526.

Relying on the Gospel, the peasants demanded free election of the clergy, abolition of serfdom, permission to hunt and fish, free use of the forests, and reduction of their burdens.

The document went through twenty-five printings within a few weeks. At the collapse of the revolt all copies were confiscated. Ed.

The fundamental and correct chief articles of all the peasants and of those subject to ecclesiastical lords, relating to these matters in which they feel themselves aggrieved.

Peace to the Christian Reader and the Grace of God through Christ.

There are many evil writings put forth of late which take occasion, on account of the assembling of the peasants, to cast scorn upon the gospel, saying: Is this the fruit of the new teaching, that no one should obey but all should everywhere rise in revolt and rush together to reform or perhaps destroy altogether the authorities, both ecclesiastic and lay?

The articles below shall answer these godless and criminal fault-finders, and serve in the first place to remove the reproach from

the word of God, and in the second place to give a Christian excuse for the disobedience or even the revolt of the entire Peasantry.

In the first place the Gospel is not the cause of revolt and disorder, since it is the message of Christ, the promised Messiah, the Word of Life, teaching only love, peace, patience and concord. Thus, all who believe in Christ should learn to be loving, peaceful, long-suffering and harmonious. This is the foundation of all the articles of the peasants (as Will be seen) who accept the Gospel and live according to it.

How then can the evil reports declare the Gospel to be a cause of revolt and disobedience? That the authors of the evil reports and the enemies of the Gospel oppose themselves to these demands is due, not to the Gospel, but to the Devil, the worst enemy of the Gospel, who causes this opposition by raising doubts in the minds of his followers, and thus the word of God, which teaches love, peace and concord, is overcome.

In the second place, it is clear that the peasants demand that this Gospel be taught them as a guide in life and they ought not to be called disobedient or disorderly. Whether God grant the peasants (earnestly wishing to live according to His word) their requests or no, who shall find fault with the will of the Most High? Who shall meddle in His judgments or oppose his majesty? Did He not hear the

children of Israel when they called upon Him and saved them out of the hands of Pharaoh? Can He not save His own to-day? Yes, He will save them and that speedily. Therefore, Christian reader, read the following articles with care and then judge. Here follow the articles:

The First Article

First, it is our humble petition and desire, as also our will and resolution, that in the future we should have power and authority so that each community should choose and appoint a pastor, and that we should have the right to depose him should he conduct himself improperly.

The pastor thus chosen should teach us the Gospel pure and simple, without any additional, doctrine or ordinance of man. For to teach us continually the true faith will lead us to pray God that through His grace this faith may increase within us and become part of us. For if His grace work not within us we remain flesh and blood, which availeth nothing; since the Scripture clearly teaches that only through true faith can we come to God.

Only through His mercy can we become holy. Hence such a guide and pastor is necessary and in this fashion grounded upon the Scriptures.

The Second Article

According as the just tithe is established by the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New, we are ready and willing to pay the fair tithe of grain.

The word of God plainly provided that in giving according to right to God and distributing to His people the services of a pastor are required. We will that, for the future, our church provost, whomsoever the community may appoint, shall gather and receive this tithe. From this he shall give to the pastor, elected by the whole community, a decent and sufficient maintenance for him and his, as shall seem right to the whole community (or, with the knowledge of the community).

What remains over shall be given to the poor of the place, as the circumstances and the general opinion demand. Should anything farther remain, let it be kept, lest any one should have to leave the country from poverty.

Provision should also be made from this surplus to avoid laying any land tax on the poor. In case one or more villages themselves have sold their tithes on account of want, and each village has taken action as a whole, the buyer should not suffer loss, but we will that some proper agreement be reached with him for the repayment of the sum by the village with due interest.

But those who have tithes which they have not purchased from a village, but which were appropriated by their ancestors, should not, and ought not, to be paid anything farther by the village which shall apply its tithes to the support of the pastors elected as above indicated, or to solace the poor as is taught by the Scriptures.

The small tithes, whether ecclesiastical or lay, we will not pay at all, for the Lord God created cattle for the free use of man. We

will not, therefore, pay farther an unseemly tithe which is of man's invention.

The Third Article

It has been the custom hitherto for men to hold us as their own property, which is pitiable enough, considering that Christ has delivered and redeemed us all, without exception, by the shedding of His precious blood, the lowly as well as the great.

Accordingly, it is consistent with Scripture that we should be free and wish to be so. Not that we would wish to be absolutely free and under no authority. God does not teach us that we should lead a disorderly life in the lusts of the flesh, but that we should love the Lord our God and our neighbor.

We would gladly observe all this as God has commanded us in the celebration of the communion. He has not commanded us not to obey the authorities, but rather that we should be humble, not only towards those in authority, but towards every one. We are thus ready to yield obedience according to God's law to our elected and regular authorities in all proper things becoming to a Christian.

We, therefore, take it for granted that you will release us from serfdom as true Christians, unless it should be shown us from the Gospel that we are serfs.

The Fourth Article

In the fourth place it has been the custom heretofore, that no poor man should be allowed to catch venison or wild fowl or fish in flowing water, which seems to us quite unseemly and unbrotherly as well as selfish and not agreeable to the word of God.

In some places the authorities preserve the game to our great annoyance and loss, recklessly

permitting the unreasoning animals to destroy to no purpose our crops which God suffers to grow for the use of man, and yet we must remain quiet. This is neither godly or neighborly.

For when God created man he gave him dominion over all the animals, over the birds of the air and over the fish in the water. Accordingly it is our desire if a man holds possession of waters that he should prove from satisfactory documents that his right has been unwittingly acquired by purchase.

We do not wish to take it from him by force, but his rights should be exercised in a Christian and brotherly fashion. But whosoever cannot produce such evidence should surrender his claim with good grace.

The Fifth Article

In the fifth place we are aggrieved in the matter of wood-cutting, for the noble folk have appropriated all the woods to themselves alone.

If a poor man requires wood he must pay double for it (or, perhaps, two pieces of money). It is our opinion in regard to wood which has fallen into the hands of a lord whether spiritual or temporal, that unless it was duly purchased it should revert again to the community.

It should, moreover, be free to every member of the community to help himself to such fire-wood as he needs in his home. Also, if a man requires wood for carpenter's purposes he should have it free, but with the knowledge of a person appointed by the community for that purpose.

Should, however, no such forest be at the disposal of the community let that which has been duly bought be administered in a brotherly and Christian manner. If the forest, although unfairly appropriated in

the first instance, was later duly sold let the matter be adjusted in a friendly spirit and according to the Scriptures.

The Sixth Article

Our sixth complaint is in regard the excessive services demanded of us which are increase from day to day. We ask that this matter be properly looked into so that we shall not continue to be oppressed in this way, but that some gracious consideration be given us, since our forefathers were required only to serve according to the word of God.

The Seventh Article

Seventh, we will not hereafter allow ourselves to be farther oppressed by our lords, but will let them demand only what is just and proper according to the word of the agreement between the lord and the peasant. The lord should no longer try to force more services or other dues from the peasant without payment, but permit the peasant to enjoy his holding in peace and quiet.

The peasant should, however, help the lord when it is necessary, and at proper times when it will not be disadvantageous to the peasant and for a suitable payment.

The Eighth Article

In the eighth place, we are greatly burdened by holdings which cannot support the rent exacted from them. The peasants suffer loss in this way and are ruined, and we ask that the lords may appoint persons of honor to inspect these holdings, and fix a rent in accordance with justice, so that the peasants shall not work for nothing, since the laborer is worthy of his hire.

The Ninth Article

In the ninth place, we are burdened with a great evil in the constant making of new laws. We are not judged according to the offense, but sometimes with great ill will, and sometimes much too leniently.

In our opinion we should be judged according to the old written law so that the case shall be decided according to its merits, and not with partiality.

The Tenth Article

In the tenth place, we are aggrieved by the appropriation by individuals of meadows and fields which at one time belonged to a community. These we will take again into our own hands.

It may, however, happen that the land was rightfully purchased. When, however, the land has unfortunately been purchased in this way, some brotherly arrangement should be made according to circumstances.

The Eleventh Article

In the eleventh place we will entirely abolish the due called Todfall (that is, [in case of death] heriot) and will no longer endure it, nor allow widows and orphans to be thus shamefully robbed against God's will, and in violation of justice and right, as has been done in many places, and by those who should shield and protect them.

These have disgraced and despoiled us, and although they had little authority they assumed it. God will suffer this no more, but it shall be wholly done away with, and for the future no man shall be bound to give little or much.

Conclusion

In the twelfth place it is our conclusion and final resolution, that if any one or more of the articles here set forth should not be in agreement with the word of God, as we think they are, such article we will willingly recede from when it is proved really to be against the word of God by a clear explanation of the Scripture.

Or if articles should now be conceded to us that are hereafter discovered to be unjust, from that hour they shall be dead and null and without force. Likewise, if more complaints should be discovered which are based upon truth and the Scriptures and relate to offenses against God and our neighbor, we have determined to reserve the right to present these also, and to exercise ourselves in all Christian teaching.

For this we shall pray God, since He can grant these, and He alone. The peace of Christ abide with us all. 🙏

Epilog:(*From Infoplease.com*)

The revolt received the blessing of the Swiss reformer Huldreich Zwingli and in Thuringia was led by the radical Anabaptist leader Thomas Münzer. Martin Luther, however, condemned the revolt, thus contributing to its eventual defeat. Lacking unity and firm leadership, the peasant forces were crushed (1525) largely by the army of the Swabian League. It is estimated that 100,000 peasants were killed. In Austria, where the revolt continued until 1526, the peasants won some concessions, but in most areas they suffered continued or increased restrictions and had to pay tribute. The peasants' defeat dissuaded further attempts by the peasantry to improve their social and political position.

Predestination and Freedom

by Robert Hach

The biblical concept of predestination has, in the hands of Calvinistic theology, been twisted into a superstition that has distorted the image of the biblical God into the picture of a capricious and pernicious deity who programmed each of his human creatures, before the creation of the world, to either believe and obey him or disbelieve and disobey him, and to experience the respective consequences of his choice forever. Accordingly, while people may seem to make their own choices regarding whether or not to believe in the biblical God and behave accordingly, they are actually unconsciously acting out a script that was written for them before they were ever born.

While many Christians reject Calvinistic theology in this extreme form, most seem to have been nonetheless influenced by it to view God as, more or less, a cosmic control freak. Which is to say that God does not smile on the desire of humans to be free to choose and to experience the natural consequences of their free choices. Or, perhaps more precisely, God allows humans to delude themselves into thinking they are free to make choices, only to make clear to them at the end of the line that human freedom is a demonically inspired fiction.

The chief error of Calvinistic theology is its concept of the sovereignty of God. In this view, God is sovereign in that whatever occurs does so because God has decided that it should occur. Whatever happens is, ipso facto, the will of God. (As in, “There’s a

reason for everything that happens.”) It could have happened in no other way because if it did, God would not be sovereign. In truth, however, events and circumstances may transpire in countless ways without lessening or altering the sovereignty of God in the least.

Calvinistic theology allows no room for the possibility that the freedom of God’s human creatures is central to God’s sovereign will – that the wise exercise of their freedom may, indeed, be the sense in which human beings reflect the divine image in which they were created. It was, after all, the apostle Paul (whose letters include a number of references to predestination) who wrote, “For freedom Christ has set us free” (Gal. 5:1). If these words are to be taken seriously, they must at least call into question the notion that God’s sovereignty is synonymous with absolute control over all that God has created.

Understanding the biblical idea of the sovereignty of God, and therefore of predestination, requires a somewhat more nuanced understanding of the will of God than fundamentalism and evangelicalism generally allow. The Old Testament and New Testament writers shared a prophetic perspective on human events, which is to say that the will of God was, for them, indistinguishable from the word of God, through which had been revealed to them God’s purpose for creation. From this revelatory perspective, God is

indeed sovereign over all that occurs in the world he created, and this means that all that occurs is, in some sense, the will of God. Having said this, however, the will of God must be understood in terms of two broad categories, which may be termed God’s purposive will and God’s permissive will.

God’s Purposive Will

From a biblical perspective, God’s purposive will consists of what God originally purposed for his creation, and thereafter, revealed in what God promised to his people. The Bible is the prophetic history of the revelation of the word of God, which is synonymous with God’s purposive will.

God’s promise, which began the progressive revelation of God’s purpose for creation, was first made to Abraham: that God would give Abraham a son, through whom God would make of Abraham a great nation, through which God would bless all nations. Through Isaac (and his son Jacob, whose name God changed to “Israel”) descended the twelve tribes of Israel which, under Moses’ leadership, became the nation of Israel. Israel became the great nation promised to Abraham under King David; one of David’s decedents—the coming Anointed One (Hebrew, Meshiach, or “Messiah”; Greek, Christos, or “Christ”: biblically, the human being whom God anointed, or chose, to rule God’s kingdom)—God promised to place on the throne of Israel in order to

fulfill God's ultimate purpose of blessing all the nations of the earth.

This is the biblical story of the fulfillment of God's original purpose for creation through the progressive fulfillment of His promise. In that the purpose of God for creation is the content of the word of God, the progressive fulfillment of God's promise is also the progressive revelation of God's word. Biblically speaking, then, the word of God is not the Bible itself but the biblical message, the word of promise and fulfillment that God revealed to and through his biblical messengers, whose message is woven into the biblical story. Accordingly, the Bible is the messenger, and "the word of God" is its message; for the NT writers, "the word of God" is synonymous with "the gospel" [1 Pet. 1:23-25], the message proclaimed first by Jesus and subsequently to all nations by Jesus' apostles. If the Bible's claims to be the story of the revelation of God's purpose for all nations of the earth through the fulfillment of God's promises, is true, the Bible is the source of information regarding God's purposive will for his people.

Calvinistic theology notwithstanding, God's people are not, in biblical terms, a fixed set of individuals who, throughout human history, constitute his people through no choice of their own. Instead, the people of God are a community of faith, consisting of whoever throughout human history has heard God's word of promise, revealing God's purpose for humanity, and have chosen to believe it.

In so doing, believers have chosen to identify themselves with God's purpose for his creation. By so doing, they have chosen to become members of the community of faith, which God foreknew and, therefore, predestined for salvation. That is to say, God did not know

beforehand which specific individuals would become members of the community of faith. Instead, God "foreknew" and, therefore, "predestined" that this community would be "called" by the hearing of the gospel, and "justified" through believing the gospel, and "glorified" as the eventual outcome of their ongoing faith in the gospel (Rom. 8:29-30). Whoever, then, hears and believes (and continues believing) the gospel has freely chosen to identify herself or himself with the predestined community of faith.

This is analogous to the scheduling of a public mode of transportation—a bus, for example—to arrive at a destination. If all goes according to schedule, the bus—and therefore all who travel therein—will arrive at its destination. Whether or not any specific individual arrives at that destination with the bus depends on his or her having purchased a ticket, boarded, and stayed on board until the bus reaches its destination. Individuals are free to choose to travel or not, but the bus (barring unforeseen developments) will arrive at its destination—is predestined to arrive—regardless of whether they arrive with it or not. The difference between public transportation and God's purpose, of course, is that God's faithfulness makes the fulfillment of His purpose inevitable (which is the biblical meaning of predestination) whereas buses are subject to the contingencies and exigencies of time and chance. The point is that a collective body—a category of people known as believers—is predestined, not the specific individuals who choose to believe and, therefore, enter that collective body.

According to the prophetic understanding of God's sovereignty, whatever God purposes—God's purpose being synonymous with God's sovereign will—God

foreknew (i.e., knows beforehand) and, therefore, predestines (or foreordains, i.e., ordains beforehand) to occur. God's purpose is subsequently worked out in human history in terms of what God has promised to his people. Biblical foreknowledge and predestination are simply words of encouragement to God's people signifying the assurance that God will be faithful to his promise. That the fulfillment of God's promise is a foregone conclusion, as good as done, only a matter of time. Therefore, those who believe God's promise are assured of enjoying its fulfillment.

God's faithfulness to his promise is, in fact, the biblical definition of God's righteousness: "You are the LORD [Hebrew, YHWH, the name of Israel's God, rendered "LORD," with all capitals, in English versions of the Bible out of respect for Jewish reticence about speaking, or writing, the name of God], the God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham. You found his heart faithful before you, and made with him the covenant to give to his offspring the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite, and the Girgashite. And you have kept your promise, for you are righteous" (Neh. 9:7-8; see also Rom. 3:1-5; 1 John 1:9; and a large number of other OT and NT texts that equate God's righteousness with God's faithfulness).

Once again, that God has predestined this community of faith to live in his presence (that is, in the kingdom of God) forever does not mean that God has predestined the specific individuals who would be members of the community of faith. It is the spiritual community as a whole, that category of people known as believers in "the word"—not the specific individuals

who choose, through faith in “the word,” to enter the spiritual community—that is foreknown and predestined to enter the everlasting kingdom of God at the end of the age.

Biblical predestination, then, rather than discouraging believers with uncertainty as to whether their shortcomings or tribulations may mean that God has not predestined them for salvation, encourages believers that, regardless of their shortcomings or the trials they face, their

membership in the spiritual community of faith means that their entrance into the kingdom of God at the end of the age is assured.

The compatibility of biblical predestination and human freedom is expressed in Jesus’ saying, “Many are called, but few are chosen” (Matt. 22:14). All who hear the word of God—defined in NT terms as “the gospel” proclaimed by the historical Jesus and, after his death and resurrection, by his apostles—“are called” into the predestined community of faith. Nevertheless, “few are chosen” in that few choose to believe the gospel (to put on “the wedding garment” of Matt. 22:11), and so, to join the predestined—which is to say, the “chosen”—community. One chooses, then, to be one of the “chosen.” In that God has “chosen”—that is, purposed and promised, foreknown and foreordained—the community of faith to enjoy life in the kingdom of God forever, God has, in effect, already “chosen” all who, of their own volition, choose to believe: collectively, their chosen-ness was purposed and promised, foreknown and foreordained from the beginning; individually, they choose to be part of the chosen community when they hear and believe the NT gospel.

God did this choosing of those who choose to believe when, in the

beginning, he chose to send his Anointed One into the world he would create and eventually redeem. In choosing to send his Anointed, God chose all who would believe “the word” of and about his Anointed: “He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for your sake, who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God” (1 Pet. 1:20-21). Accordingly, God “chose us [i.e., believers] in him [i.e., God’s Anointed] before the foundation of the world . . . In love, he predestined us [i.e., believers] for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will . . .” (Eph. 1:4-5). By choosing to send his Anointed to be the source and object of faith, in effect, God chose all who would, as a matter of their own choosing, believe in his Anointed.

All of which is to say that the proclamation, crucifixion, resurrection, exaltation, and coming of God’s Anointed was God’s purpose from the beginning of his creation, and therefore, all who believe the NT proclamation of and about Jesus are, by doing so, predestined by God to be raised from death to everlasting life in the kingdom of God.

And so, biblical predestination turns out to be entirely consistent with the freedom of God’s human creatures to choose their eschatological (from Greek, *eschatos*: last-in-time) destiny. It is this eschatological destiny itself that is foreknown and predestined for all who choose it by hearing and believing the gospel. ☺

Strange But True.

Submitted by Ron Hardin

In a small mid-western conservative town, a new bar/tavern started a building to open up their business. The local Baptist church started a campaign to block the bar from opening with petitions and prayers.

Work progressed, however, right up until the week before opening, when lightning struck the bar and it burned to the ground.

The church folks were rather smug in their outlook after that, until the bar owner sued the church on the grounds that the church was ultimately responsible for the demise of his building, either through direct or indirect actions or means.

The church vehemently denied all responsibility or any connection to the buildings demise in its reply to the court.

As the case made its way into court, the judge looked over the paperwork at the hearing and commented, "I don't know how I'm going to decide this, but as it appears from the paperwork, we have a bar owner that believes in the power of prayer, and an entire Baptist church congregation that does not!" ☺

When You Fast

By Chuck Jones

The last time I spoke about fasting was on the Sunday of our pot luck lunch. It wasn't planned that way. The irony was not over looked however. So many Church gatherings are centered around food.

The Greek word that is translated 'fasting' is a compound word that means "not eating", or "no eating". Engaging in the activity of fasting means disengaging in an activity. While fasting we are doing something by not doing something. So, when we fast, we have the opportunity to replace eating with something else.

In this article I will explore just four things concerning fasting. I won't be inclusive, but it should be a good start. These four ideas should help you know how to spend your non-eating time.

The Preliminaries

To begin our study, let's go to what Jesus taught about fasting in Matthew 6:16-18. *"Moreover when you fast, don't be, as the hypocrites, with sad faces. For they disfigure their faces, that they may be seen by men to be fasting. Most assuredly I tell you, they have received their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head, and wash your face; that you are not seen by men to be fasting, but by your Father who is in secret, and your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you.*

Fasting isn't an enjoyable activity. It may be for that reason that many people don't engage in it. However, Jesus said, "When you fast". It isn't if you do, or if you decide to fast, Jesus was thinking about the times when we do. As if it was a normal activity.

Fasting may not enjoyable, but it is truly worthwhile. There was a time when I ran road races. I prepared by running 15 miles three times a week. That running was worthwhile. Although a friend of mine reminded me often that she "never saw a jogger smiling".

Truth is that the process wasn't easy, but the results were very much worth the effort. The same is true of fasting. The difference is that while running has physical benefits (and health is the only thing you can be assured of losing), fasting has spiritual benefits that can last forever!

Along with fasting comes a great danger. That is the danger of putting on a show for others. Fasting openly, or to let everyone know you are fasting, so as to enhance your perceived spiritual standing. That must be avoided. Here is what is revealed about a heart that wants to fast for a show to others. *"Nevertheless even of the rulers many believed in him, but because of the Pharisees they didn't confess it, so that they wouldn't be put out of the synagogue, for they loved men's approval more than*

God's approval." (John 12:42-43).

Although this is about the rulers who were afraid to confess Jesus openly, it has to be realized that the praises of men were more important than the praise of God (the fear of men is very evident here).

So when you fast don't appear to be doing so. Clean up and go about your daily activities as if nothing special is going on. If you are more concerned with the praises of men, then fast openly. If you want the praise of God, do it secretly before God alone, and He will reward you.

Self Control

One of the reasons to fast is to exercise the fruit of the spirit, self control. We all, who are in Christ, have the spirit of God. Part of the evidence that we have God's spirit is self control (see Gal. 5:22-23).

Self control is something we have now. Fasting is one way we increase its power. You may choose to fast for one meal, one day, one week, or more. As you consider fasting, is your body (your flesh) in a state of rebellion? Are there multiple reasons why you shouldn't fast? Who is in charge of your body? Your appetite or the spirit of God through your mind? If you are unsure, here is some insight from the Apostle Paul about gaining control of our bodies.

Do you not know that those who

run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified (1 Con. 9:24-27).

Paul is telling us to run and fight with a purpose. I do so to discipline my body. It isn't just a nice thing to do, it means being disqualified or not! Fasting is one way to discipline our flesh to show it who is in charge.

Experience Grace

One way to look at the grace of God is how it comes through when we fast secretly before God alone. God's grace isn't something we can experience when everything is going well or we are happy. God's grace is a spiritual gem that comes when times are hard. One example of this can be found in Acts 4:33-where we are told... "And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all." What brought the great grace about? If you would look at verses 13-31, you would see that chief priests and elders threatened the Apostles for healing the lame man in the name of Jesus. These were serious charges and threats. In the face of these threats the apostles praised God and asked for more boldness to speak His word, for healing, signs, and wonders to be done. In the face of the threats they did not retreat. The tough times bring God's grace to God's servants.

A particularly difficult thing for

the Apostle Paul is recorded in 2 Corinthians 12:7-12. "And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

I don't want to debate what the 'thorn' was. Let it be enough to know that Paul wanted it taken away and he asked three times to have it removed. God's response to Paul's request was "My grace in this hard situation is sufficient."

It is accomplishing what seems to be impossible in the power of Christ. As Paul says in Philippians 4:11-13, I'll paraphrase, "I've learned to be content in all situations and I know I can do all things because Christ gives me strength to do what is needed".

Grace can come to you when you fast. Especially if it happens to be hard for you. To experience the praise of God it is worth not eating.

Learning Matthew 4:4

The last point to draw attention to is found in Matthew 4:4. "But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

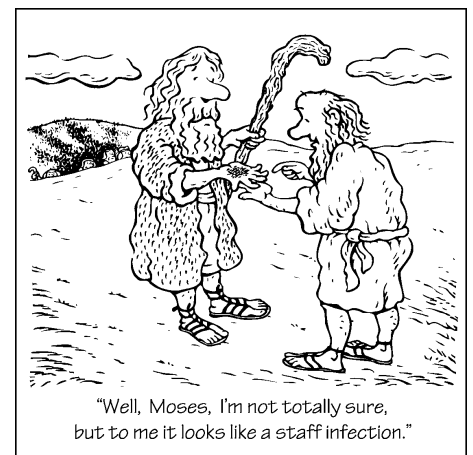
I bring this up because it comes when Jesus had fasted for forty days, and was hungry. I don't know by my experience, how hungry a person can be, but I'm sure Jesus was. In response to the temptation

to make something to eat, Jesus said, "There is something more important than food, that is every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."

I'm pretty well convinced that no one can learn the truth of this verse if fasting is avoided. When you choose not to eat, reading the Bible is a good alternative. Wait, before you dismiss this idea let me explain. There are five 'P's to any meal. We have to plan it, purchase it, prepare it, partake of it and then there is the post eating clean up. It takes a lot of time to eat a meal. More than just the time it takes to actually eat the food.

I'd dare say that more time is spent on food than is spent on Bible reading. Fasting and reading the Bible can turn that trend around. There are so many voices in the world. Television, radio, movies, magazines and newspapers. They all want to bend your ear. Fasting and reading is a great way to clarify God's voice in your life.

No one can make you fast (unless you're in prison), it is your choice. Choose in favor of fasting. Try fasting for a short time, but don't be a glutton when you break the fast. Spend the time you do fast in the Bible and prayer. You won't be sorry. 🍌



MAM Inc.

African Mission Update

by Jim Mattison

August, 2007

Once again, Malawi African Missions, Inc. teamed up with Lord's Harvest International for a 22-day mission trip to Malawi (16 days) and Mozambique (3 days). Once again the gospel of the coming Kingdom of God and the things about our Lord Jesus were proclaimed, as we have done from the very first trip in 1994. The brethren there look at me as the father of the work, although Anthony first took this truth to them in 1993. It is because of the earnest preaching of the 173 pastors that the work has grown.

Team members this year were Dr. Joe and Rebekah Martin, Jamie Engelbert, Erika Fitzsimmons, Kaitlyn Walters, and Jim Mattison (10th trip). We visited 16 churches and were warmly welcomed. The Church members' eyes shone and big smiles lit up their faces. We were impressed by their great faith in God, their strong hope in Christ, and their love one for another. The work is overseen by a seven person Board in each country and each of the many districts is overseen by a Pastor of the district, such as Bango, Chaka, Sande, Maxwell, Daud, Moyo, Frazer, Namaona, and the

isolated church of Machedemba. The church of Machedemba cares for 38 orphans. We rejoice for the five people who came forward for baptism, including a Muslim lady, during our trip.

Linda Limbe, our "lady Friday," is invaluable as our go-between for the pastors and us. We left money for 4 church foundations that were approved by the Boards. When the next step is ready, Linda will give the money needed for laying the fired brick (river sand and cement mortar). We pay for the cement, the roof trusses, and the metal sheets, while they make and fire the brick, dig and pour the foundation, level the ground, etc.

Also, the Truth is being preached in Tanzania by Jerome Chembe, who updates us regularly. Anthony is over in the Bible College in Kenya presently, teaching. Several of our ABC students have come from this college, as have Korean students from Paul College in Korea. Don Smith, presently in Botswana visiting contacts, worked in Malawi until February helping Linda establish work among the ladies of the churches (teaching reading, how to make things to sell, how to do good deeds for the elderly, and the

needy, visiting the sick, having regular times for prayer for the work, etc.) through his corporation called Rescue.

Other very close friends are Rafik and Shamim Valimahommed and their daughter Gazella. We have known them for many years. He is our money changer, and served us several delicious meals (esp. prawns in garlic butter sauce and cheese!).

Our used rented van (and driver Chibwana also known as big boss) broke down four times, once at night in the middle of nowhere. We thanked God for cell phones. But how can I forget the cracked windshield, no visor on my side, and the side door that was always coming off its rollers, the broken timing chain, losing oil, the electric system going out twice. The last time a man in white appeared, asked if we needed a mechanic, and said there was one just down the side road. While a nearby Lodge picked us up, that mechanic had the fuses needed to get us going again, with lights (when the first breakdown occurred we had to get out and push the van off the road so as not to get hit in the dark).

Can I tell you of the pitiful funeral we experienced? We were scheduled for a service at one of

Moyo's churches, but the night before we were informed a death had occurred – a 26 year-old man, an elder, who left a wife and two small children. We went to the funeral and sat on chairs provided for us. Along with the 300 – 400 people sitting on the hillside among the pigeon peas above the very small house, there was the village chief sat in his chair. The service lasted at least an hour and a half. There was much singing, several women wailing. We had to wait a long time for the Malawi-type casket to come. Several men took it inside. The house was so small they had to back out and reverse it. When they came out with it, a mat was placed on the ground and the casket placed on the mat. The poor young widow lay down beside the casket the whole service. I can't keep from crying as I write this. I couldn't bear to look at her. So pitiful. At the end, when it was over and she got up to take her place in the funeral procession to the grave, I went to her and hugged her. I didn't know what else to do. They don't understand English. I will never forget that scene. Team member Kaitlyn Walters, an excellent artist, is going to paint that scene for me.

It was a wonderful trip in spite of the problems. God was with us the whole time. I had to ask the team one morning for the anointing with oil and laying on of hands for a breathing problem. That, too, went away. As Psalm 84 says, we “went from strength to strength” through it all. We also met in two “brush arbor” churches that had bricks made ready to build when they were approved. The Boards in both countries have a policy to build only 3 churches a year in each country. Churches now cost around \$1200 or more. Dr. Chimoyo gave us his needs. We hope to help him. Because of our giving him many medical supplies through the years,

he treats the church people free. He lives in Mulanje but recently moved his clinic to Luchenza, where the population to serve is much larger. He received his medical training in England. His first need is \$3500 to put with his saved \$1500 for a reconditioned car from South Africa. His second need is a laptop computer at the office which we hope to get him (Linda's cost \$2500). His third need is to buy land on the highway and build a more well-equipped clinic, with a lab, etc.

Linda's new work with the women in the churches is a valuable addition to the work. A number of the women can now read their Bibles, their good deeds have resulted in several conversions. There is a Lazarus school for Mchemba's orphans. Linda hopes to have a school like this in every church. We don't call them orphans, but “children of the school.” Thanks so much to you who make it possible to help with this mission work by your prayers and offerings. Any offerings may be sent to MAM or to LHI. ☺

(For all our readers who endured a hot summer.)

It Was So Hot This Summer that...

Submitted by Ron Hardin

...the birds had to use potholders to pull worms out of the ground.

...the trees were whistling for the dogs.

...the best parking place was determined by shade instead of distance.

...hot water could come out of both taps.

...you could make sun tea instantly.

...you learned that a seat belt buckle makes a pretty good branding iron.

...the temperature dropped below 95 F (35 C) and you felt a little chilly.

...you discovered that in August it only takes 2 fingers to steer your car.

...you discovered that you can get sunburned through your car window.

...you could actually burn your hand opening the car door.

...you broke into a sweat the instant you step outside at 7:30 a.m.

...your biggest bicycle wreck fear was, "What if I get knocked out and end up lying on the pavement and cook to death?"

...you realized that asphalt has a liquid state.

...the potatoes cooked underground, so all you have to do is pull one out and add butter.

...the cows were giving evaporated milk.

...farmers were feeding their chickens crushed ice to keep them from laying boiled eggs. ☺



God Wants Us to Know!

By Vince Finnegan

He has always wanted His people to know Him and His ways. However, man has to want to know, because God will not violate free will. The good news is that God wants us to know; therefore, we are able to do so. The determining factor is with us.

Do we want to know? In the days of Isaiah, God revealed Himself to the prophet but not to Israel. He commissioned Isaiah to go forth and confront the people regarding their obstinance and hard-heartedness. *“Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Because they did not want to know and obey”* (Isaiah 6:8-10). God did not allow them to know.

The irony of this record is that Isaiah was given the privilege to see and hear God as so few have, and the message he was given to speak was regarding Israel’s inability to see and hear. During the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry, many did not want to know. So he did not speak to them plainly, rather in parables. His disciples asked why he spoke in parables. “He answered and said unto them, Because it is

given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive” (Matthew 13:11-14).

After his explanation he quoted to them the same verse stated in Isaiah 6:8-10. The context of these comments was regarding the parable about the seed and the sower which relates to hearing and receiving the Word of the Kingdom. The multitudes were not interested in hearing about the Kingdom; therefore, he did not plainly teach them. However, the eyes of the disciples were blessed. *“But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them”* (Matthew 13:16-17).

Why did these fishermen, tax collectors, and common men get to hear the great truth spoken by our Lord? Was it because of their

background, education, genealogy? No, No, No! They heard because of God’s grace and election which was offered because they had a heart for God and wanted to know. The people in Jesus’ day saw the Word of God in the flesh, and they heard the Word spoken. They also saw many supernatural miracles. Yet, the vast majority did not really see or hear because they did not have a genuine desire for God. Their hearts were far from Him. But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: *“That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them”* (John 12:37-40).

The Apostle Paul explained to the Corinthians that the truth regarding Christ was not for the intellectuals of the world or the religious hypocrites or the debaters of this age. The knowledge of God is given to those who are humble and hunger to know. For those who ask, seek, and knock, God provides the spirit of truth which illuminates the mind. By again quoting Isaiah (this time from 64:4), Paul reveals that things regarding Christ are for those who really love God. *“But*

just as it is written, "things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love him." (1 Corinthians 2:9 NASB).

The spirit reveals the things of God to those who are influenced by it. *"For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words"* (Verses 10-13).

God gives the spirit so that we can know. God wants us to know. In the same context we are told that the natural man cannot know, because he does not want to know. *"But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised"* (Verse 14).

The spirit serves as a replacement for the ascended and soon coming Christ. Jesus taught that it is better for the believers to have this spirit than him in person, for the spirit enables us to have the mind of Christ.

"But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ" (Verses 15 and 16). God wants us to know. 🍀

Perspective of Life

Submitted by Elliott Marshall

I've learned....

That the best classroom in the world is at the feet of an elderly person.

That just one person saying to me, 'You've made my day!' makes my day.

That having a child fall asleep in your arms is one of the most peaceful feelings in the world.

That being kind is more important than being right.

That you should never say no to a gift from a child.

That no matter how serious your life requires you to be, everyone needs a friend to act goofy with.

That sometimes all a person needs is a hand to hold and a heart to understand.

That simple walks with my father around the block on summer nights when I was a child did wonders for me as an adult.

That it's those small daily happenings that make life so spectacular.

I've learned... That under everyone's hard shell is someone who wants to be appreciated and loved.

That to ignore the facts does not change the facts.

That when you plan to get even with someone, you are only letting that person continue to hurt you.

That love, not time, heals all wounds.

That the easiest way for me to grow as a person is to surround myself with people smarter than I am.

That everyone you meet deserves to be greeted with a smile.

That no one is perfect until you fall in love with them.

That life is tough, but I'm tougher.

That opportunities are never lost; someone will take the ones you miss.

That when you harbor bitterness, happiness will dock elsewhere.

That I wish I could have told my Mom that I love her one more time before she passed away.

That one should keep his words both soft and tender, because tomorrow he may have to eat them.

That a smile is an inexpensive way to improve your looks.

That when your newly born grandchild holds your little finger in his little fist, you're hooked for life.

That everyone wants to live on top of the mountain, but all the happiness and growth occurs while you're climbing it.

That the less time I have to work with, the more things I get done. 🍀

Sin, Illness, and Prayer

by Norman McLeod

Jesus commanded us to love our enemies and pray for those who "despitefully use you and persecute you," that you may be counted as God's children. Why? "Because he makes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends his rain on the just and the unjust." (Matt. 5:43-45.)

God shows no favoritism in the general blessings He showers on mankind. The most confirmed sinner and man of the world may live in luxury, while another who never harmed anyone in his whole life, but has always lived the best Christian life he can, will suffer from poverty and illness. In my work in the Welfare Dept., I have seen some of the most cheerful, loveable, Christian people who were receiving public assistance, and never complained of their lot. Certainly they are those of whom James spoke when he said: "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him." (James 2:5)

We believe that God is all powerful and all good. If He were not He would not be God. Since God is all powerful and all good, then the problem that confronts the believer is: Why is evil in the world? Many people lost their religion at that point when the first World War came. They reasoned that no God who was all good would ever allow such terrible things to happen. They therefore cast God out of their lives.

Not long ago our attention was called to a poor old woman who had one misfortune after the other,

and then when things seemed to look a little better, she was found to have cancer. One of my fellow workers said very sarcastically, quoting from the poet, Browning, "God's in his heaven, all's right with the world." He, of course, thought he was quoting from the Bible. The Bible does not teach that all's right with the world. In fact it often seems to teach that all's wrong with the world. The oldest problem of the believer is to understand why evil and suffering are in the world. The oldest book treats of that subject. The Book of Job most intriguingly discusses the problem of evil.

If Job were living today, he would be called out as an example of a true Christian. In fact, his life was in many ways superior to the average professed Christian. When his children gathered at one another's houses to have a good time, he offered sacrifices to God, and prayed lest the young people might have forgotten God in their merrymaking. Few Christians are so zealous today. The writer in the prologue of the book of Job shows that evil and suffering are in the world to test character. Job lost all his family and possessions, and then his health, all through no fault of his own. His character was tested by his misfortunes and was found to be strong.

Job's friends brought against him a very common accusation: your sufferings are due to your sins. The chief argument of the body of the story is centered around this discussion. Job says that he knows that he is a sinner, but not in

proportion to the calamities that have come upon him. If one wishes to have an argument in almost any group of people, that is always one guaranteed to do so. Jesus agreed with Job that suffering was not due to sins. He was told by some of his followers about some of the Galileans whom Pilate had killed. He replied to the effect that they were not worse sinners than other Galileans. He added another incident about some people on whom a tower fell, and then proceeded to say that they were no more sinful than other people. Ill health, financial disaster, and other misfortunes are not due to our sins. They are as a result of the forces of nature. All men – good, bad, and indifferent – become ill and die.

God does not show favorites. Some people are chastened by misfortunes while others are not. That is the principal difference between the Christian and the unbeliever.

Should we then, pray for our own health and that of others? Does ill health come on us because of our sins? Often have we observed people, who were quite devout and who believe that God will grant the prayer for health, remain ill for years in spite of their very obvious faith and their prayers. Jesus and his apostles suffered torture and death in spite of the fact that their faith far exceeded that of any of us now days. Why was Abraham's prayer, "O, that Ishmael might live before thee" not granted? Because it would change God's plan. Why did Christ suffer such a horrible death? Because it was for his perfection,

and a sacrifice for us. It was according to God's plan from the foundation of the world. " The captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering." (Heb. 2:10) Some time ago, I found myself praying to be kept from the evils of this world. I was aroused to the fact that that prayer is not according to the scriptures.

James (1:2) says: "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations etc." Why should we be happy about being tempted? Because overcoming those temptations gives us a new zeal towards Christ, and makes us of stronger character. A young man we know gave up smoking, not because it was immoral, or expensive or a detrimental habit, but just to show that he had the strength of character to do it. He said that after about six weeks he had a new zest for life and a new feeling of strength. He has no religious profession whatsoever. It is a purely disciplinary measure to help him enjoy life more fully. A Christian could do the same, only the religious element would make it even a greater victory. Perhaps the illnesses that we suffer can be a means of discipline that should bring us nearer to God, It could make our prayer "Thy kingdom come" have a much fuller meaning than to one who is blessed with good health. Should we pray for good health? Perhaps! But if we examine the great prayers of the Bible, we find that they have other subject matter. Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple asked that God be with the people of Israel so that in adversity they would be forgiven their iniquities when they turned to him. David's prayers were full of thanksgiving and praise rather than begging for this or that: Christ's prayers were for his followers that they might be faithful in this life and so attain to eternal life. ☪

Cascade Bible Fellowship

Ephesians 6:1-15

Verses 1-3. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord." All societies expect children to render due respect and obedience to their parents. Our own society is suffering today because this principle is not inculcated in children from infancy on, as it once was! The results arising from disrespect and disobedience are seen all around us, and these results are--in fact--violence, confusion, and heartbreak!

"First commandment with a promise." Sons and daughters who do manifest proper respect and obedience are promised a longer life than those who care little for their parents' wishes and needs.

Verse 4. Christian parents, for their part, also have a responsibility to deal with their children in wisdom and fairness. While training their children in the ways of the Lord and in the knowledge of Scripture, godly parents--while being firm--need to use patience and love instead of harsh discipline and unnecessary rules.

Verse 5. "Slaves." When Paul wrote his letter, much of the population in the Roman empire was enslaved to masters who owned them as simply so much property. The masters had the power of life or death over their slaves. When the Romans destroyed Jerusalem A.D. 70, many of the Jewish survivors were sold into slavery and scattered about the Empire. Moses' prophecy in Deuteronomy 28:68 was fulfilled

at that time, when loads of Jewish captives were shipped to Egypt to be marketed for sale as slaves. History records the exact fulfillment of this ancient prophecy!

"Obey your earthly masters." The gospel could not destroy the institution of slavery by violence or political action. It could, however, teach the Christian slaves to be faithful workers in service to their masters. The latter could be won to Christ by the testimony of godly slaves and the love shown by them! On the other hand, Philemon provides the example of a Christian who was a master having slaves, one of whom--Onesimus--became a Christian himself.

Verse 6. "Slaves of Christ." Slaves--and employees today--can regard their service as offered primarily to Christ Himself, since we are to do all things as "unto the Lord" (Col. 3:23). When we look at our work in that light, it becomes so much more fulfilling and rewarding than it would be if we worked merely to please our fellow mortals.

"Serve wholeheartedly." The Christian's labor should not be grudging or half-hearted. Apathy and lethargy have no place in Christian conduct! We are to act with zeal and eagerness to do good (Titus 2:14).

Verse 8. "The Lord will reward." Salvation itself is by grace, through faith (Eph. 2:8). Rewards, however, are additional, and are given in accordance with our works. Jesus

makes this clear in the parable of the pounds, or minas--Luke 19:11-27.

Verse 9. "Masters." Now Paul gives some important directions for Christians who own slaves. In our modern setting, these principles would apply to Christian employers or bosses. There are businesses in America that try to follow such principles, with the result that their employees are happier, more loyal, and far more productive.

Verse 10. "Be strong in the Lord." Paul had learned that he could "do everything through him who gives me strength" (Phil. 4:13). He believed Jeremiah's warning: "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength" (17:5). Only in God and His Anointed Son can true and lasting strength be found! "His mighty power." The power that created and sustains the universe is made available to His children who trust and seek Him.

Verses 11,12. "The full armor." The armor God provides is able to supply all needed protection against a wicked, strong, and determined enemy--the Devil. This enemy is not "flesh and blood"--i.e., human. Rather, he heads up an army of "spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." Paul has already defined and located those "realms" as the place where Christ is seated at God's right hand (Eph. 1:20,21). The Book of Job reveals that Satan is able to appear before God and give account of his activities (1:6; 2:1,2). Paul has also described him as "the ruler of the kingdom of the air" (Eph. 2:2) or "prince of the power of the air" (KJV)--the "spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient." If angels are "spirits" (Heb. 1:7), then Satan as a "spirit" can also move and operate in the unseen realm to carry out his

plans or schemes. One of his most successful "schemes" is to convince men that he doesn't exist personally, after all!

"Powers of this dark world." Literally, the "cosmocrats of this darkness." These are the evil "principalities and powers" organized under Satan in his planned attempt to bring about the downfall of the human race. Christ has now been given authority over all angelic beings--whether they be the "elect angels" (1 Tim. 5:21) that serve and obey God, or instead the angels that serve and obey Satan (Matt. 25:41).

Verse 13. "Full armor." God is the one who provides the entire suit of armor, but it is our responsibility to put it all on! The apostle will go on to describe the individual pieces of that armor. Being clothed with the armor, we are enabled to take a victorious stand against Satan, his hordes, and all his deceitful wiles. "When the day of evil comes." Life can seem to go on for a time without serious challenge, but Satan may plan to use a particular day or days for his attack! This scenario is what we see in the case of God's servant, Job. When those times come, we must be prepared beforehand, already wearing the armor.

Verse 14. "The belt of truth." Our God is a "God of truth" (Deut. 32:4; Psa. 31:5). There is no deception or error in His character or in His doings. What He declares is what always squares with reality. When we "obey the truth" (Gal. 3:1; 5:7) and "walk in truth" (3 John 4), Satan's deceptions and lies are unable to mislead us. Jesus said that the devil was a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44), a liar destroying men's lives by the lies he tells--lies that they believed and still continue to believe! His first lie to

mankind was to deny the reality of death (Gen. 3:4), and God had to set the record straight by the truth about death (3:19). Most of the religions of the world keep swallowing and teaching this lie, with dire results! Only true New Testament Christianity declares that death is an enemy (1 Cor. 15:26) and that the only victory over death is through resurrection, not survival of the so-called "soul" or "spirit" when a person dies.

"Breastplate of righteousness." According to the gospel, righteousness is--first of all--a gift from God (Rom. 3:21-26; 4:1-8; Eph. 2:8,9). Believers already accounted righteous are then to go on to do "good works" (Eph. 2:10), living a life of visible righteousness that displays the inner spirituality that God has wrought in them (Phil. 2:12,13). Satan has a hard time coming against a believer who is totally committed to the will and ways of God!

Verse 15. "Gospel of peace." "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom. 10:15 KJV). The true gospel teaches believers to live at peace with all men and to abstain from violence. When the church became apostate in the time of Constantine, it adopted the worldly ethic of violence as a solution to differences--going to war and using coercion to enforce its will on others. In contrast, Christ said, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. 5:9). Paul later developed this theme in Romans 12:17-21. Satan loves violence and incites men to make use of it. Believers, therefore, must avoid using it or seeking revenge, but rather must seek peaceful ways of dealing with differences and with oppressors (Matt. 5:43-48). ☹

We Got Mail

Dear Bro. Jones

Please send "Wisdom & Power" to the following (addresses). Enclosed is a check to help out a little.

Your folks visited here in our home many years ago. Rob & Karen receive W&P and I read theirs. We live here together. I am now 90. I've read the last issue (July/August) cover to cover and enjoyed it much.

Thanks. Keep up the good work.
Christian love,
Mildred G. Lanning

Dear Bro. Jones,

I would like to tell you I really enjoy the Wisdom & Power Magazine. The last one I read was January /February 2007. The magazine was sent to my old address. We moved. We now go to the Pine Grove Bible Church in the Minneapolis Area. I was out to lunch recently with Dave and Mary Otto. They reminded me of the magazine and that I needed to write to you about the address change. They said to say 'hi'.

Robert Bormes

Please put my mother on your mailing list to receive Wisdom & Power. Enclosed please find a check to help with postage. My mother is a member of the Cleveland Church of God and I'm a member of the New Hope Church of God in Little Rock.

God Bless,
Theresa Skillaultt

Dear Wisdom & Power,

THANK YOU for promoting, and reporting on, the Essay Contest: "What the Kingdom Means to Me" And, of course, a special thanks to those who worked so hard in writing, reading, and evaluating the essays. I find it refreshing that in a world saturated with Harry Potter there are many young people who have caught a glimpse of eternity ... and have taken the time to tell us about it so well. God bless you all.
Brian J. Atra

Hi Chuck,

Thoroughly enjoyed your fine Wisdom & Power. Your editorial was excellent. Corey's article was good, in fact, so true. Mark Clarke's was excellent. It should be made into a tract. I thought about having it translated into Chicchewa and give to the 173 African preachers. May do that. What's his address? Steve Taylor's devotions are always good. I get them all the time. It was good to see Norman McLeods's name. I had tremendous respect for him. Brian's article was good, however, my pastor and I are out of sorts with him for making fun of Bobby Partain's grammar, then signing himself PHD, as though he was it. Bobby Partain is emphatically against believing in a devil but he is a good man, lives the Christian life, raised a large family of all faithful kids, speaks for the truth whenever he is building houses. He's a deacon, could be an elder except the old system of only two elders prevails. He and I don't agree on the devil, but we love each other. He's had a little schooling, but his earnestness for the Lord is far greater than most preachers.

Don't knock Bobby around Guthrie Grove.

Love, Jim

Editor's note: I wasn't aware that any dispersions were made toward Bobby's grammar. That is not our intention. This is why no issue should be debated in the letters to the editor section. The staff of W&P has high regard for Bobby Partain. Never let it be said otherwise.

Chuck,

I just watched the "Human Jesus" video last night and wanted to pass on my compliments to you for your involvement in such an awesome product! It was excellent. What an awesome tool that video will be for us as a church body and it excites me to have such a resource to share w/friends, family and neighbors! Great job!

And thanks too, for making room for our essay winners in your magazine this past month. I appreciate it, and hope that others will be moved and encouraged into whatever God may be calling them to do to further His Gospel. I need to spend some time planning our next one for 2008!

In Christ I live and hope,
Angela

Editors note: That video can be seen at www.JesusIsHuman.com.

Fool!

By Dr. Brian Atra.

Quite a harsh term. Jesus warned against using it vainly. Those who did so trod the precipice to gehenna's flames.

God uses the term "fool". His scribe observes, most famously in Psalm 14:1, "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God." Obviously, most readers take this to be a denial of atheism. The thought is: "only a fool would deny God's existence." Who could look around and NOT believe in God?

I have pondered that on icy trips in January along US Highway 65 between Springfield, Missouri and Branson, Missouri, calling on God amidst one of the most picturesque drives between the Rockies and the Smokies. The icicles seemed to dance from the branches. Then again, some were tree-huggers. If you require more graphic testimony of God's beautiful creation, look at cover after cover of *Wisdom & Power*.

The Bible speaks about observing nature and recognizing God. Paul, in Romans 1, says nature itself is enough to convict a person that God exists. So, only the blind fool would say, in his heart, "There is no God."

But, there's more ...

In the Hebrew text the words "there is" are missing. These words were added by Bible translators to make the sentence complete. That is why "there is" is in italics in so many translations.

It really reads more like: "The fool hath said in his heart **no**, God". And two more very rich interpretations emerge.

The world of the Old Testament was a world where atheism was virtually unknown. Many people --

and this is not unknown even today -- worshiped multiple deities. To tell the reader that a fool denies God's existence would be so basic, so universal, it would hardly take a great Bible writer to persuade such a reader.

But let's read it another meaningful way. "The fool has said in his heart, NO, God." Ah, the fool. The person who does not doubt God's existence but, rather, sure of His being, dares to tell God "No." In theological terms: "I affirm the existence of an eternal, immortal, holy, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, omnibenevolent God ... but I will NOT serve Him."

Chilling! Incredible? It happens every day. Thousands of times. And it was common enough in the days of the Psalms that God had to post the warning ... more than once!

You see, the heart of atheism is not an intellectual issue; it is a selfish and moral issue. That is why debates over atheism generate much heat but no light. Neither side has been persuaded, yet each goes home claiming victory. Both live exactly as they have lived before, perhaps tinged with just a touch more pride.

Atheism: There is no God, I may do as I please without sin, guilt, need for repentance, or any threat of punishment. Defiance: To know the living God, the Almighty, the Creator ... and tell him "No!" We now move from the realm of the intellectual heights to the epitome of stupidity.

But, there's more ...

Yet a third reading may strike us. "The Fool hath said in his heart NO GOD." This is the man who doesn't deny God's existence nor does he willfully violate God's laws.

He does not care about God. "I don't need God." "No God for me." This man says, "God, leave me alone." And he tells others, "Don't put your religion on me."

One may see thousands of such people, educated, wealthy, urbane, on Sunday mornings: on golf courses, pontoon boats, party barges (when a pastor owns one it's a pontoon boat and when others own one it's a party barge), sidewalk cafes, the arboretum, or for many millions of others, lying drunk in bed, or if not in a house at all, with a dirty needle on the pavement, unable to get up. "God, don't bother me." "Leave me alone."

God remains patient. And loving. And hopeful.

But there's more ...

A sad day comes: horrible, inescapable judgment.

Someone has said, "There is nothing so sure in life as death and taxes." He was wrong. First, some believers will be alive when Christ returns and will never die. Second, there are nations in the world where no taxes are assessed. But don't pack your things yet; it's tough to get in those places. Easier to maneuver your camel through a needle's eye!

This one thing is sure: Judgment! God's holiness demands it while fools deny it.

Judgment -- a day when all, the great and small, stand before God. Only God can help. Only God can forgive. Only God can grant life.

Fools come in a lot of varieties. Some have denied His existence. Some have refused to yield to Him. Some fools have prayed -- without knowing it -- "God don't bother me," only to receive an eternal answer to such pitiful entreaties.

"Alas! Depart from me." To the lake of fire, which is the second death ... Fool! "God is not mocked. What a man sows, that's what he is going to reap." 🍀