

Present Truth

2 Peter 1:12

Dear Readers,

September 2001

“Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.” (2 Timothy 1:2) I pray that you are all doing well. By the time you receive this paper I will be in Africa visiting with some brethren there. Brother Howard Williams of Restoration Ministries in Jamaica will join me on this mission to visit some of the brethren overseas. Please pray that the Lord will use us to minister to others while we are there. We will be visiting Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Tanzania. The next video in the “The Good News About God” series is ready for distribution. It is entitled “The Father and the Son.” It is a 90 minute video that covers this subject quite thoroughly. I encourage you to obtain a copy of this video, either in video or audio cassette format. May God bless you abundantly.

Editor

Shall it be Grace or Sin?

by Alonzo T. Jones

It can never be repeated too often, that under the reign of grace it is just as easy to do right, as under the reign of sin it is easy to do wrong. This must be so, for if there is not more power in grace than there is in sin, then there can be no salvation from sin. But there is salvation from sin. This no one who believes Christianity can deny.

Yet salvation from sin certainly depends upon there being more power in grace than there is in sin. Then, there being more power in grace than there is in sin, it cannot possibly be otherwise than that wherever the power of grace can have control, it will be just as easy to do right as without this it is easy to do wrong.

No man ever yet naturally found it difficult to do wrong. His great difficulty has always been to do right. But this is because man naturally is enslaved to a power—the power of sin—that is absolute in its reign. And so long as that power has sway, it is not only difficult but impossible to do the good that he knows and that he would. But let a mightier power than that have sway, then is it not plain enough that it will be just as easy to serve the will of the mightier power, when it reigns, as it was to serve the will of the other power, when it reigned?

But grace is not simply more powerful than is sin. If this were indeed all, even then there would be fullness

of hope and good cheer to every sinner in the world. But this, good as it would be, is not all. It is not nearly all. There is much more power in grace than there is in sin. For *“where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”* (Romans 5:20) And just as much more power in grace than there is in sin, just so much more hope and good cheer there are for every sinner in the world.

How much more power, then, is there in grace than there is in sin? Let me think a moment. Let me ask myself a question or two. Whence comes grace? From God, to be sure. *“Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”* (1 Corinthians 1:3) Whence comes sin? From the devil, of course. Sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning. Well, then, how much more power is there in grace than there is in sin? It is as plain as ABC that there is just as much more power in grace than there is in sin, as there is more power in God than there is in the devil. It is therefore also perfectly plain that

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by Lynnford Beachy

the reign of grace is the reign of God, and that the reign of sin is the reign of Satan. And is it not therefore perfectly plain also that it is just as easy to serve God by the power of God as it is to serve Satan with the power of Satan?

Where the difficulty comes in, in all this, is that so many people try to serve God with the power of Satan. But that can never be done. *"Either make the tree good and his fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt and his fruit corrupt."* (Matthew 12:33) Men cannot gather grapes of thorns nor figs of thistles. The tree must be made good, root and branch. It must be made new. *"Ye must be born again."* (John 3:7) *"In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."* (Galatians 5:6) Let no one ever attempt to serve God with anything but the present, living power of God that makes him a new creature, with nothing but the much more abundant grace that condemns sin in the flesh and reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. Then the service of God will indeed be in *"newness of life."* (Romans 6:4) Then it will be found that His yoke is indeed *"easy"* and His burden *"light."* (Matthew 11:30) Then His service will be found indeed to be with *"joy unspeakable and full of glory."* (1 Peter 1:8)

Did Jesus ever find it difficult to do right? Every one will instantly say, No. But why? He was just as human as we are. He took flesh and blood the same as ours. *"The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."* (John 1:14) And the kind of flesh that He was made in this world was precisely such as was in this world. *"In all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren."* (Hebrews 2:17) *"In all things!"* It does not say, In all things but one. There is no exception. He was made in all things like as we are. He was of Himself as weak as we are, for He said, *"I can of mine own self do nothing."* (John 5:30)

Why, then, being in all things like as we are, did He find it always easy to do right? Because He never trusted to Himself, but His trust was always in God alone. All His dependence was upon the grace of God. He always sought to serve God, only with the power of God. And therefore the Father dwelt in Him, and did

the works of righteousness. Therefore it was always easy for Him to do right. But as He is, so are we in this world. He has left us an example, that we should follow His steps. *"It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure,"* (Philippians 2:13) as well as in Him. All power in heaven and in earth is given unto Him, and He desires that you may be strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power. *"In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,"* (Colossians 2:9) and He strengthens you with might by His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your heart by faith, that you may be *"filled with all the fullness of God."* (Ephesians 3:19)



Alonzo T. Jones 1850-1923

True, Christ partook of the divine nature and so do you if you are a child of promise and not of the flesh, for by the promises ye are partakers of the divine nature. There was nothing given to Him in this world and He had nothing in this world that is not freely given to you or that you may not have.

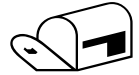
All this is in order that you may walk in newness of life, that henceforth you may not serve sin, that you may be the servant of righteousness only, that you may be freed from sin, that sin may not have dominion over you, that you may glorify God on the earth, and that you may be like Jesus. And therefore *"unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. ... Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."* (Ephesians 4:13) And I *"beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."* (2 Corinthians 6:1)

(This article was first printed in the September 1, 1896 issue of the *Review and Herald* it is also found on pages 82-85 of the book *Lessons on Faith*, by A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner. Editor)

"I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." (Psalms 40:8)



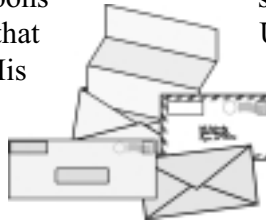
Letters from our Readers



“At mail call today, I received a whole bunch of stuff! You’re right, I have a whole lot to study now. Thank you so much for sending these things.

“I’ve been doing so much work here inside these walls. Many people show an interest in the truth, and a few are actually showing up on Sabbath afternoons for church. Praise God! Praise Him and pray that He would send forth many more laborers into His harvest.

“Enclosed are the completed studies and I look forward to the next set. I apologize for my delay in writing, but I’ve been very busy and I find it difficult to break away from witnessing to do much else.”



Oregon

“Please send ‘Christ Our Righteousness.’ I never did receive your Bible study. Thank you. Would also like a copy of ‘These Last Days.’ I have dropped off copies of your leaflets in local libraries, etc. Have you any word about anyone starting a group in the Rutherford - Lake Lure area in North Carolina?... I do enjoy the letters from the brothers and sisters and how truth is changing their lives. I do get literature from another group who also follow the Bible teachings—the truth.”

North Carolina

“My name is _____. I just got here from another camp. I’m very interested in your Bible study program and getting the ‘Daily Breads’ and other reading materials that you have to give to people that like to read, so I will be waiting on you now. Have a nice day, God bless us all. Amen.

“PS Do you all have a Bible to send? I would appreciate one. I have problems about envelopes. Could you all help me?”

Ohio

“I am sure I speak for all of your readers when I say I appreciate the time, effort, and with a certainty, much prayer that each of you at Smyrna Gospel Ministries put into each and every issue that you publish. I enjoy and read with interest every article in the different publications,... But I especially look forward to your ‘Questions and Answers.’”

Montana

“I recently received one of your fliers at a Promise Keepers convention, on how that God wants a God fearing church!

“Your presence in Indiana to distribute those tracts is very much appreciated for the body of Christ! Keep up the good work. If the free book offer is no longer avail-

able I will understand. However, if you still have the book on *America in Prophecy*, I can appreciate any co-operation from the people in West Virginia. Thank you, too. And pray also for the healing of the nations! That’s why I had traveled so much in the early ’90s praying and seeking a new beginning and bright future for the United States of America!

“Help me as I try to build up America instead of destroy our culture and society of Christian virtues.”

Indiana

“I was very glad when I first found one of your booklets including King James Bible from a colleague. What I could say is, God bless you for taking it upon yourself doing this great job which costs huge sums of money.

“My friend gave me one of the pamphlets titled, ‘The Truth About God,’ and this sheet has been well treated. I am trying to make some points to be studied in my ministry at the end of June.

“Please, more copies are required for further studies, and Bibles, and also if you have any other teaching aids. Thank you.”

Ghana

“Greetings from the Lord Almighty to you, for there is no other name greater than Him. I am very glad to write to you. How are you doing, in the name of God? I hope by the great guidance of our sympathetic Father you are fine as I am.

“Sir/Madam, my mission for writing to you is that I have received the tracts you gave to me and I enjoy reading them. As such it has given me a new life story in my Bible studies. But I would like to ask you a question, which is: So does it mean the Sabbath has now been changed from Saturday to Sunday or what? According to the Law of God tract. Please try to send me information on that, because a friend of mine said the Sabbath has never changed.

“Sir/Madam, as the tracts you gave me have given me a new story when I studied it, I would like you to give me more for me to share them among my church members and friends at home for them to study it and also get a new life in God and also any other Bible subjects. But I would like to receive the ‘Law of God’ tracts and ‘One Hundred Bible Facts on the Sabbath Question’ tracts in abundance.”

Ghana

(The Sabbath has never been changed from Saturday to Sunday by God. Man has attempted to make this change, but man can never change God’s law. Any such change

could only be the law of man, not the law of God. Saturday is still "the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." *Editor*

"I have the most honour to write you these few words. I am a 23 year old Ghanaian who likes to hear the Word of Jehovah God. I was very glad when I got your address.

"I would be very grateful if you could please send me one of your Holy Bibles, the New International Version, and *America in Prophecy*. I know you would please send this Bible to me, without any obligation, and this would enable me to read more about Almighty Jehovah God.

"Also, this would help me to understand the Word and would have strong faith and believe in Almighty Jehovah God more. I strongly believe that without getting the New International Version, which I request, you would surely get another Bible for me. ...

"Could you please help me to understand these few questions and the below quotations from the Bible? The reason being that I met a new theocratic leader who is different from my understanding and his teachings are different from all that I learned from my pastor. I am preparing to go back to my pastor for more information. Also, the theocratic leader does not want to read any of your magazines that I give him" *Ghana*

(Several of this man's questions are addressed in this month's "Questions and Answers" section. Also we do not send out New International Version (NIV) Bibles because we do not believe it is a good translation. For a thorough study on this subject, please request the March 1999 issue of *Present Truth*, and read the article entitled "Which Bible?" *Editor*)

"I have received your most welcome letter and the new Bible study lessons. I sure hope the Lord is blessing you and yours and the wonderful staff there at the ministries. ...

"Enclosed are the other lessons I have done! Please remember me in prayer as I do you all there in West Virginia. I pray God to bless and keep you all in His hands." *Florida*

"I have been told the Jehovah's Witness organization would donate a large amount of Bibles. You would probably want to ask them for King James versions. They have distributed the King James version in the past.

"I myself would be willing to send some Bibles overseas if I had instructions.

"We will be praying for your ministry, camp meetings and your trip to Africa." *Tennessee*

(We appreciate your interest and suggestions regarding the need for Bibles overseas. The biggest problem with this project is that once you get started, it mushrooms to the point where it takes all your time, attention and money. Surely there are other ministries that we could refer these people to to get their Bibles. Our ministry is not set up to deal with the

volume of requests that come in. It would take our focus away from the ministry that we believe God has outlined for us to carry out. Currently we have one letter from Nigeria, requesting Bibles to be sent to 300 different addresses. We receive many letters from Ghana, requesting anywhere from 1 to 1000 Bibles each. We have recently obtained the addresses of Bible societies in Ghana and Kenya that we can refer these people to and we are hoping they can obtain their Bibles in that way. Of course, there are always isolated requests for Bibles that come in from various places, perhaps you could assist with some of those requests. Thank you for your offer to help. *Editor*)

"Please, I have received your letter you have sent. I read it with much happiness. I am very happy for the materials you have sent. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to you for the materials you have sent. Please, I am very much interested to learn more about what the Bible teaches and I will be very much happy and grateful to you if you add my name to your mailing list.

"In fact, these materials will enable me to learn more about what the Bible teaches and also assist me to go about proclaiming the Word of God to people so that they may repent from their bad deeds and turn from the darkness and follow the light with the mighty power of God. His light must shine no matter the darkness.

"My main aim is to reveal the character of God to people, but before I can do this I myself must be somebody who is submissive and dedicated to the Lord and I must be somebody who spends much of my time in reading of the Bible before I can reveal the character of God, so that people will have a better understanding of God's character, which will enable them to have a closer relationship with God. I believe that with your help and by the mighty power of God I will be able to win more souls for Christ." *Ghana*

"I received a copy of your *Present Truth* newsletter, January 2001, from a friend... on June 1st, 2001.

"The magazine was informative, educative, interesting and bearing the truth every Christian should know. I therefore kindly request you to include me on your list." *Zimbabwe*

"I am interested in getting your newsletter on a regular basis. If this is available to be sent to me, my address is... Thank you in advance for your time. May God continue to bless this ministry as it shares the light of God to this darkened world." *Virgin Islands*

(We really appreciate all your letters. Please keep them coming. We have received several letters from people expressing how much they appreciate reading these letters because it gives them a picture of what is taking place around the world. *Editor*)



Questions and Answers

by Lynnford Beachy



Question: *What about women's head veilings?*

"In a recent *Present Truth* Question and Answer page, you addressed a question from Zimbabwe, concerning women's place in the church. About that same time, I received the enclosed article, 'The Women's Head Veiling,' ...which I am enclosing in the hopes that you will have time to read it, and perhaps have time and space to address the subject in a future issue of *Present Truth*." *Montana*

Answer:

You brought up a very good question. As you read 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 it is obvious that there was some confusion among the Corinthians regarding head coverings during prayer and prophesying. Some of the women in that church must have decided to reject the custom of the Jewish women, who always covered their heads in public. "It was... a custom among ancient females, and one that was strictly enjoined by the traditional laws of the Jews, that a woman should not appear in public unless she was veiled. See this proved by Lightfoot *in loco*." (*Barnes New Testament Notes on 1 Corinthians 11:5*)

Notice how Paul begins this subject: "Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you." (1 Corinthians 11:2) The Greek word *παραδοσις* that was translated "ordinances" in this verse was used 13 times in the New Testament. This verse is the only place where it was translated "ordinances." Every other time it was translated "tradition" or "traditions."

Concerning the Greek word *παραδοσις*, Spiros Zodhiates, in his book, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary—New Testament*, wrote, "A tradition, doctrine or injunction delivered or communicated from one to another, whether divine (1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6) or human (Matt. 15:2, 3, 6; Gal. 1:14; Col. 2:8). In Mark 7:3, 5, the expression 'the tradition of the elders' occurs. The Pharisees delivered to the people by tradition their ancestors' many injunctions which were not written in the Law of Moses. For this reason the sect of the Sadducees rejected them, saying that what was written should be esteemed obligatory, but that which came from oral tradition need not be observed. Thus, Josephus explains the expression 'the traditions of the elders' or of the Pharisees. The words of the elders were considered more desirable than the words of the prophets."

Most of the time the Greek word *παραδοσις* is used it is spoken of in a bad light, such as "the tradition of men"

or "the tradition of the elders." Jesus said to the Pharisees, "Laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men." (Mark 7:8) *Παραδοσις* usually indicates customs that were handed down by word of mouth, as opposed to being handed down in writing. However, this Greek word can also include customs that were handed down in writing.

Today when we speak of tradition it usually indicates a ritual or practice that is performed merely because it is the established way of doing things, or because our ancestors did it that way. The *Webster's New World College Dictionary* defines "tradition" as "the handing down orally of stories, beliefs, customs, etc. from generation to generation... a long established custom or practice having the effect of precedent or unwritten law... Theologically, a) among Jews, the unwritten religious code and doctrine regarded as handed down from Moses b) among Christians, the unwritten teachings regarded as handed down from Jesus and the Apostles." According to this definition there is no room for a tradition that is written down as law. Once it is written down as law, then it ceases to be a tradition and becomes a law.

It is clear that at least up until the time Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 11, the practice of women covering their heads was a tradition that was orally handed down by the Jews and many other nations around them. It was not a written law. You cannot find any command in the Old Testament, or the teachings of Jesus, for women to cover their heads, whether it be during prayer or at any other time. There is no record that this tradition existed in the Garden of Eden, nor was this tradition unique to God's people. There were many nations who also practiced this tradition. Today, in many eastern countries, this custom is still widespread. Even in the United States this custom is practiced among some groups of Christians.

Immediately after Paul commended the Corinthians for keeping the traditions he delivered to them, he began expounding on head coverings. In verses 4 and 5 he wrote, "Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven." (1 Corinthians 11:5) Later in this chapter Paul wrote, "Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?" (1 Corinthians 11:13) Paul appealed to the Corinthians' reason to settle the matter. Apparently, at that time, it was not commonly recognized as proper for a

woman to engage in prayer or prophesying with her head uncovered. If she did, it would go contrary to the established tradition of women having their heads covered in public. At that time, if women were allowed to participate in prayer and prophesying with their heads uncovered, it would bring a reproach upon the church. To the other nations around them, it would look like the women in the church were not submissive to their husbands, because the head covering, at that time, was recognized as a sign of a woman's submission to her husband.

Paul finished his discourse on head coverings in this way: "But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God." (1 Corinthians 11:16) In other words, if there is anyone in the church who does not wish to accept this counsel, and wishes to allow women to pray or prophesy with their heads uncovered, we do not have such a custom, neither the churches of God. So here Paul referred to the practice of allowing women to pray or prophesy with their heads uncovered as a *custom*. And it is clear from what we have seen so far that the practice of prohibiting women from praying or prophesying with their heads uncovered is also a custom or a tradition.

The question is, "Is this custom obligatory for us today?" Should we, as God's people, prohibit women from participating in prayer and prophesying with their heads uncovered? Paul wrote, "Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?" (1 Corinthians 11:13) At that time it was obviously not comely or appropriate. It was not the generally accepted custom, even among heathen nations, for this to take place, and if the church allowed it then, it would bring reproach upon the church. However, today the generally accepted custom, at least in the United States, is for women to be seen in public with their heads uncovered. This is also true in most churches of today. Today, if a woman participates in prayer or prophesying with her head uncovered it does not bring a reproach upon the church, because it is not generally regarded as inappropriate.

For the first 4,000 years of earth's history there was no divinely inspired, written law regarding head coverings for women. In Paul's day it was a common custom for women to be seen in public with their heads covered. Paul referred to head coverings for women as a custom and a tradition, and he instructed us to judge for ourselves whether it is comely or not to continue this tradition. Today it is a custom for women to be seen in public with their heads uncovered. When a woman is seen with her head uncovered, even in church, in prayer, or engaged in prophesying, it does not bring a reproach upon God's church. The real issue in this portion of Paul's letter was the overall image that God's people presented to the

world. Paul was concerned that some people in the church at Corinth were carrying on practices that would give a bad reputation to the church. This was the real issue, rather than whether a woman was to wear a head covering or not.

For these reasons I do not believe that today, at least in the society we live in here in the United States, God requires women to have their heads covered during prayer or prophesying. There are certain areas and cultures in this world today, where the custom remains for women to have their heads covered. In such cultures I believe Paul's counsel regarding this custom applies.

If a woman chooses, even in a culture that does not expect it, to cover her head during prayer, prophesying, while she is in public, or all the time, that is her choice. I do not see a problem with that. It is when this practice is believed to merit salvation, or when it is forced upon others, that it becomes a problem.

I would like you to consider something for a moment. There are some who claim, based upon the Scriptures we just examined, that women must always wear head coverings because Paul wrote that women should pray with their heads covered and he also wrote that we must "pray without ceasing." (1 Thessalonians 5:17) However, keep in mind that Paul also wrote that *men* should pray with their heads uncovered. If we are consistent in following this line of reasoning for men, then we must forbid men from covering their heads at all times so that they can pray without ceasing with their heads uncovered. Yet, I doubt you could find a man in this world who would be willing to keep his head uncovered for his whole life. This would be especially true for those men who live in cold climates where it would be injurious to health to go out in the cold without something covering the head and ears.

I hope this helps to answer your question about head coverings.

Question: Is one denomination bound for heaven?

"Those who would be going to heaven; are they from one particular church? And how are they selected?"

Ghana

Answer:

First of all, we must have a biblical understanding of what the church is. The Bible says, "Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven." (Hebrews 12:22, 23) According to the Bible, God's church is made up of those whose names are written in heaven, in the Book of Life.

There are many people who attend the Roman Catholic Church whose names are written in the Book of Life. There are also many people who attend the Roman Catholic Church whose names are not written in the Book of Life. This is also true of the Baptist church, the Methodist church, the Presbyterian church, etc. Only those whose names are written in the Book of Life will enter into the kingdom of heaven. There is not a denomination in this world whose members will all go to heaven. If you are a part of a particular denomination, it will not guarantee that you will enter into heaven. Neither will being separate from a particular denomination exclude you from going to heaven.

Many people really think that because they are a member of a particular denomination they will be given access to the kingdom of God, and if they separate themselves from that denomination they will have closed any possibility of entering into heaven. This idea is without foundation in the Bible. The only criteria of whether anyone will enter into the kingdom of heaven or not is whether their name is written in the Book of Life or not. *“There shall in no wise enter into it [the New Jerusalem] any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”* (Revelation 21:27)

Although it is true that being a part of a particular denomination will not ensure that we will enter heaven, there will come a time very soon when being a part of certain denominations will cause us to be guilty by association, and will cause us to be lost. The Bible says, *“Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men’s sins: keep thyself pure.”* (1 Timothy 5:22) It is possible to be a partaker of other men’s sins by approving of them. God said, *“When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers.”* (Psalms 50:18) Paul wrote, *“Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.”* (Romans 14:22) Allowing things to go on around you, and consenting to them, will result in becoming guilty yourself.

If we are in a denomination where evils are being practiced and condoned, doctrines of devils are being taught, and souls are being misled, God calls to us *“saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”* (Revelation 18:4)

I hope this helps to answer your question.

Question: What is Babylon?

“What is the meaning of Babylon the Great and what does it stand for?”

Ghana

Answer:

The term “Babylon the great” is only used twice in the Bible, and both times it is found in the book of Revelation. The word Babylon is derived from Babel, which means “confusion.” Nimrod thought he and his followers could build a tower that would reach heaven, but God confused their languages. From that time until now the name Babylon often signified a false form of religion.

In the book of Revelation Babylon is called “that great city.” We are told, *“the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.”* (Revelation 16:19) The falling of Babylon is symbolic of the falling of all false religions just prior to Christ’s second coming.

In Revelation chapter 17 Babylon is personified by a woman riding upon a beast. We read, *“upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”* (Revelation 17:5) Babylon is said to be the mother of harlots. She is not only a harlot herself, but is the mother of other harlots. A harlot in the Bible is often used to signify false or apostate religions. She is said to have made *“the inhabitants of the earth... drunk with the wine of her fornication.”* (Revelation 17:2) By giving her wine of corrupted doctrines to other religions, she has made them her daughters. Some of the wine of Babylon includes Sunday sacredness, the immortality of the soul, consciousness in death, the trinity, image worship, purgatory, etc. When we trace all these false doctrines back to the source, we find that they were first brought into Christianity through the Roman Catholic Church. This, along with the Biblical description of Babylon, the antichrist, the man of sin, and the little horn of Daniel 7 leads me to the conclusion that Babylon is the papacy and all her daughter churches who are drunk with the wine of her false doctrines.

The Bible says, *“Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.”* (Revelation 18:2) It is time to come out of Babylon before we are destroyed with her. *“Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”* (Revelation 18:4)

Question: Does God work in Sunday churches?

“I have attended a Truthseekers fellowship in my area. I can see no conflict in my spirit with any doctrines that I heard expressed. My first question is: Is it possible to be anointed in the spirit of God, to perform manifestations of the spirit such as healing, prophecy, and any other gifts

that are spoken of in the Word of God, if you are in error regarding the Sabbath, or any other misrepresentation of God's Word? Next: My spirit has testified of the power and the presence of God in a Sunday church, how can this be? These two questions are really eating at me. I have been blessed to be led to the truth (over a decade ago) but these two things are a constant burden to me. I love the Lord with all my heart and want to always serve him. I guess my real problem is how can a church be under the sway of the anti-Christ and yet have the power and glory of the true living God? I pray that you can give me some guidance on these matters. Hope to hear from you soon."

E-mail

Answer:

You brought up an excellent question. There were some Pharisees in Christ's day who faced a similar dilemma. They said of Christ, "*How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.*" (John 9:16) Of course in this case Christ was not a sinner, and the miracles were of God.

One of the gifts that God gives to His church is the working of miracles. However, notice the order in which God gives gifts to His church. "*And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.*" (1 Corinthians 12:28)

From this you can see the order of importance God places on these gifts. The first is apostles, then prophets, then teachers, and "*after that miracles, then gifts of healing.*" You see, the working of miracles is not a sure test of whether a person is right in doctrine or whether they have their lives right with God. Jesus said, "*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*" (Matthew 7:21)

Here Jesus is talking about people who did many wonderful works, and even cast out devils in Christ's name. Yet Jesus says to them, "*depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*" Their lives were not right with God, yet they were performing miracles.

Not all miracles come from God. In fact, the description the Bible gives about the last days indicates that there will be more visible miracles done through satanic agencies than through God's agencies.

In Revelation chapter 13 we read of a satanic power that "*deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast.*" (Revelation 13:14) This false prophet will be destroyed. The Bible says, "*And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.*" (Revelation 19:20)

In the last days the manifestation of miracles will be more and more common, but many of these miracles will be designed to deceive people. John wrote, "*I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.*" (Revelation 16:13, 14)

Satan is working with signs and lying wonders to deceive men as quickly as he can because he has but a short time. "*Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.*" (Revelation 12:12) The Bible tells us that in the last days we will see the "*working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.*" (2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10)

The only safeguard against being deceived in the last days, by Satan's miracles, is to receive the truth, love the truth, and follow the truth. Jesus said, "*For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.*" (Matthew 24:24) Satan's use of miracles to deceive, in these last days, is focused upon God's people. Satan would have little success among God's people if he were to get a witch doctor from a tribe of headhunters to perform his miracles. All Christians would recognize these miracles to be of Satan. Satan seeks to use ministers of the gospel to work his miracles, because he knows that many people will trust a minister, who performs miracles, to tell them the truth. In this manner Satan can convince Christians of some of the most ridiculous falsehoods, **merely because the people are willing to trust their eyes over the Word of God.**

The Bible says, "*To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*" (Isaiah 8:20) We are to compare everything with the Bible, no matter how reputable the source is from

which we received it. Though Paul was an apostle, he commended the Bereans for searching the Scriptures for themselves to see if what he told them was the truth. (See Acts 17:11.) *"The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets."* (1 Corinthians 14:32) In other words, no matter where you hear something, you must compare it with the Word of God before you accept it.

Paul wrote of those whom Satan uses to masquerade as ministers of the gospel as, *"false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."* (2 Corinthians 11:13-15)

We cannot trust ministers just because they are able to perform miracles. This is the primary tool that Satan uses to deceive God's people in the last days. As Christians, above all, we must be more diligent than the world around us to examine the Bible, and more cautious when we see miracles performed. Unfortunately, many Christians see miracles as a sign that God is with a person, yet it should make us more cautious than if no miracle was performed, because we have been warned that miracles will be Satan's primary means of deceiving God's people in the last days.

The next question concerns your spirit testifying of the power and the presence of God in a Sunday church; First of all, this power and presence may have been with you alone. You can experience the power and presence of God when you are alone in a field, with nobody else around for hundreds of miles. God is not dependent upon a church gathering to make His power and presence known. Second, there are people who testify that the power and presence of God is with them, when in reality it is the work of the Devil. Please don't get me wrong here. *I am not judging you or your experience.* However, it is something to consider. If you walked into a witches coven and had the same experience, would you conclude that God was truly working through those people? Certainly not! Our feelings must be subject unto the Word of God. *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"* (Jeremiah 17:9)

There are places in the Bible where God used people, and even groups of people, who were not living up to the light that God had given them, and were walking contrary to His law. I will give a few examples.

"And it was told Saul, saying, Behold, David is at Naioth in Ramah. And Saul sent messengers to take David: and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as appointed over them, the Spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul,

and they also prophesied. And when it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they prophesied likewise. And Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they prophesied also. Then went he also to Ramah, and came to a great well that is in Sechu: and he asked and said, Where are Samuel and David? And one said, Behold, they be at Naioth in Ramah. And he went thither to Naioth in Ramah: and the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on, and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah." (1 Samuel 19:19-23)

Here is an example of the Spirit of God coming powerfully upon people who were in open rebellion against God; who had murder in their hearts. God was still able to manifest Himself in these people, although it was under unfavorable circumstances.

Another example of where God used a man who was in direct rebellion against Him is the story of Balaam. The Moabites were troubled by the presence of the Israelites, and their king, Balak, sought out a prophet to curse the Israelites. They found a prophet by the name of Balaam. Balaam agreed to consult God as to whether he should go curse these people or not. *"And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed."* (Numbers 22:12) At first Balaam was faithful to this command and told the representatives of Balak to return home. But Balak did not like to hear this report, and he sent more honorable princes to talk with Balaam, and they said, *"Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me: For I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people."* (Numbers 22:16, 17)

Balaam, knowing the command of the Lord but being desirous of honour and riches, decided to press the issue with God. He said to the princes, *"I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the LORD will say unto me more. And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do. And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab. And God's anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the LORD stood in the way for an adversary against him."* (Numbers 22:19-22)

God allowed Balaam to choose earthly honour and riches over God's commands, but God was not happy about this and sent His angel to be his adversary. Then Balaam's ass that he was riding spoke to him, rebuking his madness.

Instead of cursing Israel, Balaam blessed them, much to the dismay of Balak. *"And Balak said unto Balaam,*

What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed them altogether." (Numbers 23:11) Balaam chose riches and honour above the commandment of God, but he didn't even receive the riches and honor. Balak refused to promote Balaam, but sent him back home. Balaam was eventually killed for his sin.

"Balaam also the son of Beor, the soothsayer, did the children of Israel slay with the sword among them that were slain by them." (Joshua 13:22) Peter commented on this man's wickedness when He wrote of those who, *"have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet."* (2 Peter 2:15, 16)

Yes, God can use people, or groups of people, who are living in rebellion against Him. This does not mean that we can live in rebellion against God and expect to receive blessings or gifts from God. Just because we can see that God uses a particular person or group does not mean that we should join that group or follow that person. We must each study the Bible for ourselves, and not trust our salvation to any man. *"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent."* (Acts 17:30)

I pray that this helps to answer some of your questions.

Question: Will God destroy this earth?

"Is God going to destroy the earth with fire?" Ghana

Answer:

Yes. *"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. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."* (2 Peter 3:10-13) This all takes place a thousand years after the second coming of Christ. (See Revelation chapters 20 and 21.)

Question: Will the earth abide forever?

"What is the clear meaning or explanation for the following verses: Ecclesiastes 1:4; Psalm 100:1; Isaiah 60:1; and Isaiah 45:18." Ghana

Answer:

"One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever." (Ecclesiastes 1:4) The earth abides forever, or as long as it exists. The term for ever in the Bible does not always mean that it has no end. For example, the Bible says that *"Hannah went not up [unto the house of the LORD in Shiloh—verse 24]; for she said unto her husband, I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD, and there abide for ever."* (1 Samuel 1:22) Did Hannah mean that Samuel would remain in the house of the Lord in Shiloh for all eternity? Certainly not! She explains herself in verse 28. She said, *"Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there."* (1 Samuel 1:28) So here the biblical term "for ever" really means "as long as he liveth."

Another example of this is found in Deuteronomy chapter 15. Here it says concerning servants, *"And it shall be, if he [your servant] say unto thee, I will not go away from thee; because he loveth thee and thine house, because he is well with thee; Then thou shalt take an aul, and thrust it through his ear unto the door, and he shall be thy servant for ever. And also unto thy maidservant thou shalt do likewise."* (Deuteronomy 15:16, 17) Now it is obvious that this servant will not be a servant to his earthly master for all eternity, but only "as long as he liveth."

So when the Bible says, *"One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever,"* (Ecclesiastes 1:4) it does not indicate that this earth will exist for all eternity, but merely until it ceases to exist. The message of the verse really is that the earth outlasts the inhabitants of it. The Bible says that God will destroy this earth with fire and create a new one. (2 Peter 3:10-13)

The next verse you mentioned is, *"Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands."* (Psalms 100:1) This is a general call for all people to worship the Lord in song.

The next verse you mentioned is, *"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee."* (Isaiah 60:1) This statement applies to all those who reflect the glory or character of God in their lives, especially to those who will live in the last days, of whom it is said that God the Father's name, or character, is written in their foreheads. (Revelation 14:1)

The next verse you mentioned is, *"For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else."* (Isaiah 45:18) God created this world to be inhabited. We who inhabit this world have

defiled it by our sins, so God will make a new heaven and a new earth, which will also be made to be inhabited by perfect and holy people.

I pray that this helps to answer your questions. I am thankful that God has given us His Word to be a guiding light, and has not left us in the hands of erring mortals.

Question: Who should partake of the Lord's Supper?

“What is the right way of taking the Lord's Supper? There are some people who call themselves Christians but they don't [take part], are they sinners? At the Lord's Supper, for instance, they would pass the wine and the bread without anyone [taking] it, then we're told by the elders that we're finished eating. Those who are going to heaven, are they the only people who are supposed to eat the Lord's Supper?”

Ghana

Answer:

Paul gave some very good instruction regarding this. He wrote, “Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation.” (1 Corinthians 11:27-34)

As you can see here, it is a very serious thing to take part in the Lord's Supper (or Communion). We must examine ourselves to see if we have our lives right with God before we take part in Communion. If, after you examine yourself, you realize that you are not right with God, then you must make the necessary preparations so that your life is right with God, or you must choose not to take part in Communion until you have made the necessary preparations in your life. If you have not given your life to God, then you should not take part in Communion.

Question: Did meat eating shorten man's life span?

I have to say I disagree with what you wrote [last month, *Present Truth*, August 2001, page 5] until it is fully understandable. First, before all things let me give all praise and honor to God. Now, I read that man's life span was shortened because of God's sons having way with the earthly women, having children by them. That

would be in Genesis 6:1-8. As for clean and unclean [animals] that began when God told Noah what was what, not in the wilderness, if you read Genesis 7:1-3. According to Exodus they were not punished because they ate meat (Exodus 16:11-36), it was more because of them being hardheaded or greedy in one point and not listening to the words as so many do today. I would like an answer very soon. Thank you.

West Virginia

Answer:

Thank you for sharing your concerns. I appreciate it very much. First of all, let me say that I do not have all the answers. I pray and study to seek God's counsel to give an answer to those who ask. “*The heart of the righteous studieth to answer.*” (Proverbs 15:28) Yet, I am still an erring mortal, and my opinion is not to be regarded above the Word of God. I endeavor to keep from expressing my own opinions in the answers, and try to let the Word of God speak for itself. However, there are times when my own opinions come across. This is the case with the portion of the answer you are referring to regarding the reduction of man's life span.

I stated, “God permitted meat eating after the flood due to a lack of other things to eat, and as a means to shorten man's life span, to keep them from becoming as evil as they were before the flood.” (*Present Truth*, August 2001, page 5) The reason I made this statement is that it is logical that the fruit and vegetable food supply was very limited immediately following the flood, which can be demonstrated by the fact the the dove Noah sent out had no place to rest its feet. (Genesis 8:6-11) Also, there is no question about the fact that man's life span was drastically reduced after the flood. I stated my opinion when I said that this reduction of man's life span was brought about by the introduction of meat into the diet. There may have been other factors involved in this process besides meat eating. However, there is scientific documentation to the fact that meat eating reduces man's life span by introducing problems into the system that would not exist otherwise.

For example, meat eating causes a higher amount of uric acid in the blood; that does not occur when eating fruits, nuts, grains and vegetables. Meat-eating animals have the ability to rid the body of uric acid through their urine. The human body has a very difficult time disposing of uric acid, therefore it stores it in the body, causing many problems. Notice what the *World Book Encyclopedia* has to say about uric acid:

“Uric acid is a nitrogen-containing chemical produced in the digestive system during the breakdown of many foods. Birds, land-dwelling reptiles, and some mammals discharge uric acid as waste matter called guano (see

GUANO). Some animals, including amphibians and most fishes, convert uric acid into urea, a compound removed mostly in the urine (see UREA).

“Human beings normally have a small amount of uric acid in their blood, but in some cases, too much of it may accumulate. This excess of uric acid can cause a variety of diseases. For example, deposits of uric acid crystals in the kidney can result in kidney failure. Accumulations of uric acid crystals in the urine can form kidney stones. Deposits of uric acid crystals in tissues around the joints can trigger attacks of gout (see GOUT). Other medical conditions associated with excess uric acid in the blood include high blood pressure, obesity, and high levels of cholesterol (fatty substance) in the blood.

“Some babies are born with a defect in body chemistry that leads to an excess of uric acid in the body. This hereditary disorder is called Lesch-Nyhan syndrome, and it can result in mental retardation.” (*World Book Encyclopedia*, article: Uric Acid)


If meat eating was not the only cause for man’s life span to be decreased, I believe it was the primary cause.

Thank you for pointing out that the distinction between clean and unclean animals existed long before Moses’ time. I am sorry that I did not make that clear last

month. The way it is worded in Noah’s time indicates that this distinction existed before Noah’s time, and must have existed since creation.

God provided the flesh of quail for the Israelites to eat, but He only did this after they complained for the flesh pots of Egypt. (Exodus 16:3) The book of Numbers indicates that this provision of quail meat was not permanent. In Numbers 11:4-34 is the account of the Israelites receiving more quail than they could eat, and it was a curse to them, rather than a blessing.

Thank you for your insight on these things. I hope this helps to answer your questions and concerns.

Thank you all for your participation. I do not have all the answers, but I am thankful that God’s Word has all the answers we need. Keep studying! 

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