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Finally, brethren
WHATEVER THINGS are true
are noble
are just
are pure
are lovely
are of good report
IF THERE IS ANY VIRTURE AND IF THERE IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY –
meditate on these things.

PHILIPPIANS
4:8

You can download this month's Meditate On These Things as a PDF file by clicking [here](#). Also, an archive of past MOTT issues is available at christistheway.com.

"There is not an object of natural beauty on which we prize ourselves that will not decay; and soon all our price and pomp will be laid low in the tomb. It is sad to look on a beautiful lily, a rose, a magnolia, and to think how soon all that beauty will disappear. It is more sad to look on a rosy cheek, a bright eye, a lovely form, an expressive brow, an open, serene, intelligent countenance, and to think how soon all that beauty and brilliancy will fade away. But amidst these changes which beauty undergoes, and the desolations which disease and death spread over the world, it is cheering to think that all is not so. There is that which does not change, which never loses its beauty. "The word of the Lord" abides. His cheering promises, his assurances that there is a brighter and better world, remain amidst all these changes the same. The traits which are drawn on the character by the religion of Christ, more lovely by far than the most delicate coloring of the lily, remain forever. There they abide, augmenting the loveliness, when the rose fades from the cheek; when the brilliancy departs from the eyes; when the body molds away in the sepulchre. The beauty of religion is the only permanent beauty in the earth; and he that has that need not regret that that which in this mortal frame charms the eyes shall fade away like the flower of the field" (Albert Barnes, Notes on First Peter 1:25).

Question from Nigeria about Length of Mosaic Age

Question:

I sent a question last time when I saw how perfectly you calculated the Numbers of years of patriarchal age through the bible, I wanted to know the number of years of mosaic age as well.

Answer:

The Mosaic age began when the Law was given from Mount Sinai six months after Israel left Egyptian bondage (Exodus chapters 19-24). Solomon began construction of the Temple 480 years after Israel left Egypt (1 Kings 6:1), and he reigned 36 years after that (1 Kings 11:42). His son Rehoboam reigned 16 years (1 Kings 14:21, and he was followed by Abijam (3 years, 1 Kings 15:1-2), Asa (41 years, 1 Kings 15:9-10), Jehoshaphat (25 years, 1 Kings 22:41-42), Jehoram (8 years, 2 Kings 8:16-17), and Ahaziah (1 year, 2 Kings 8:25-26). Then evil Queen Athaliah usurped the throne for 6 years (2 Kings 11:1-3), but then Joash, the proper heir to David, reigned 40 years (2 Kings 12:1), followed by Amaziah (29 years, 2 Kings 14:1-2). Uzziah (Azariah) his heir was struck by leprosy for his disobedience, and his son reigned in his stead while he was still living. The total length of the reign of Uzziah was 52 years, and the total reign of his son Jotham was 16 years (2 Kings 15:32-33), but how much their reigns overlapped is uncertain. Then Ahaz reigned 16 years (2 Kings 16:1-2), followed by Hezekiah (29 years, 2 Kings 18:1-2), Manasseh (55 years, 2 Kings 21:1), Amon (2 years, 2 Kings 21:19), Josiah (31 years, 2 Kings 22:1), Jehoahaz (3 months, 2 Kings 23:31), Jehoiakim (11 years, 2 Kings 23:36), Jehoiachin (3 months), and finally Zedekiah (11 years, 2 Kings 24:18). This brings us to the year Jerusalem was destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar, which is dated by secular historians as 586 B.C. Jesus was born while Herod the Great was still living (Matthew 2:1), and we know from secular history that Herod died in 4 B.C. This would place the death of Christ in 29 - 30 A.D. Thus the total time from the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai until it was removed by the Lord's death on the cross (Colossians 2:13-17) was approximately 1500 years.

Ignorance Is No Excuse

Mike Thomas | Kokomo, Indiana, USA

It seems as if ignorance is shunned in every aspect of life except religion. Children are expected to learn the correct spelling to "cat" and the right answer to "2 + 2." An operator of a vehicle is expected to know what to do at a yield sign and to know how far to park from a fire hydrant. A tax payer must be able to prove the deductions he is claiming. Ignorance in any one of these examples will result in penalty. Sincerity alone does not justify our mistakes, especially when they are fatal. When a man picks up a live wire thinking it is without electricity, will his sincerity keep him from being shocked? When a doctor prescribes the wrong medication, will ignorance prevent the patient from getting sick? Indeed, we are expected to know the truth in every aspect of life if we are to find safety and success. "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Proverbs 16:25).

Unfortunately, that caution and exactness is not always required of people in practicing religion. To the contrary, ignorance is celebrated and justified. "God's mercy covers our sins as we do things that are contrary to His will." Or, "God doesn't care what we do in religion as long as we are kind to one another." Thus, the philosophies of "Attend the church of your choice" and "Practice the religion that best suits you" are given free reign.

When Paul addressed the people of Athens he said, "I perceive that in all things you are very religious" (Acts 17:22). He could see they were passionate about their religious beliefs but he rebuked them for their ignorance and ungodliness. He announced, "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent" (verse 30). Ignorant of God's will? Yes. Sincere in their beliefs? Absolutely. Justified in their sins? Not a chance. They had to repent of sin as they learned the truth. The same was true for the unbelieving Jews Paul encountered. He said of them, "I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness ... have not submitted to the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:2-3). Sincerity did not save them, either. We cannot be hearers only of God's word to be pleasing to Him; we must also be doers of it as well (James 1:22). From God's point of view, there is such a thing as right and wrong in religion. Specifically, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:3-6). Jesus said, "And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch" (Matthew 15:14). He was addressing those who were willfully ignorant of the truth because of their refusal to obey God in all things. Certainly, we should avoid the same mindset.

Yes, we need God's mercy and patience to grow in our knowledge of His will (2 Peter 3:18), but we must also be committed to rightly dividing His word to be pleasing to Him (2 Timothy 2:15). This is why He tell us to "Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22). Why issue this warning if ignorance is our safety net in religious matters? Why tell us to "test all things" if there is no danger in selecting the wrong belief?

"All Gave Some, Some Gave All"

Jefferson David Tant | Roswell, Georgia, USA

For over 60 years, our neighboring town of Alpharetta has had an "Old Soldiers' Day" parade to honor those who have served our country in times of peace and war, and thus preserved our freedom. The title, "All gave some, some gave all," refers to the fact that all of our service men and women have given their time and effort to serve, and some have given all, in that their very lives were given and sacrificed on the altar of freedom. It is certainly fitting that we pay our tribute to those who serve, both young and aged.

But is there not an application for us as Christians? We recall Paul's admonition to Timothy:

"Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier" (2 Timothy 2:3-4).

Are not all Christians soldiers—soldiers of the cross? We sing the song "Am I a Soldier of the Cross?" How would you answer that for yourself? While those in the U.S. Armed Services can retire after years of service, I was not aware there was a temporal retirement for those in the Lord's Army. Oh, we are promised a great "retirement" one day, but not in this life.

What do we expect of our soldiers—the Marines, Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, National Guard? We expect diligence, alertness, readiness. As Christians we have a Commander in Chief, not the president of the United States, but the commander of a great host. When young David approached Goliath, he said "I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel" (1 Samuel 17:45).

What would happen to a soldier who went into battle, sought for a nice shady tree, and then sat down to watch the battle unfold? One of two things would happen. (1) He would quite likely end up dead, or (2) he would be court-martialed for "dereliction of duty."

Why is it that so many Christians are content to sit on the sidelines? Oh, they faithfully attend church services, and are careful to avoid sinful conduct, but what are they doing in the way of being engaged in the battle for truth? Consider another of Paul's admonitions to Timothy: "This charge I commit unto thee, my child Timothy, according to the prophecies which led the way to thee, that by them thou mayest war the good warfare" (1 Timothy 1:18). The word "warfare" (**American Standard Version**) is from the Greek "strateia," which **Strong's Greek Dictionary** defines as "military service, i.e. (figuratively) the apostolic career (as one of hardship and danger):--warfare."

While most of us who read these lines may not be facing hardship and danger, that does not mean that we cannot be actively engaged in using the "weapons of our warfare."

"Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and Having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take The helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints' (Ephesians 6:13-18).

This is more than filling the pews on Sunday, more than paying our taxes, more than obeying the traffic lights, and more than being nice to our neighbors. What do our soldiers do when one of their comrades is captured in battle? They set out to rescue him! What do we do about friends, family, neighbors, co-workers, store clerks, etc. that have been captured by our greatest enemy, Satan? Do we complacently go about our daily lives and make no effort to save them from eternal hell?

James encourages us to “prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves” (James 1:22). “Let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins” (James 5:20).

Yes, there are those in the world today who have given all. Many of the young girls who were captured by the Boko Haram in Nigeria some months ago were Christians. And there are Christians in other Islamic strongholds who are suffering slavery, torture and death.

While we may not be able to rescue them from temporal death, we can work to save souls from eternal death. God expects no less. He expects us to give and give more than lip service.

Walk In Love | Ephesians 5:2

Patrich Farish | Waxahatchie, Texas, USA

The words sprint, dash, jog, trot, compare with the word "walk" as the speedy hare with the tortoise. These words speak of greater-than-normal exertion because "in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize" (1 Corinthians 9:24). As the tortoise came on to beat the hare, so the one who walks "in love" will in fact be victorious in the pursuit of life eternal.

"Walk" is used in the Bible to (1) indicate normal moving around. This is the sense of the word on the occasion of Jesus coming to the disciples (Matthew 14:25ff). When Paul tells the Ephesians to walk in love, "walk" refers (2) to the journey of life. On this journey, how are we to walk?

We begin with the passage just cited: we must walk in love. If we truly walk in love we will obey Him; "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments" (1 John 5:3). If we walk in love of God, our walk with our fellow man is natural. So Paul writes, "Let all that you do be done in love" (1 Corinthians 16:14).

We "walk ... according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:4). Those who walk according to the Spirit arrange their lives according to the revelation of the mind of God given by the Spirit; this is why Paul wrote that "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The choice we have is between flesh and spirit. If our choice is according to our wisdom, even innocently (1 Corinthians 1:21), we have chosen "flesh"; and, living "according to the flesh you will die." However "if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live" (Romans 8:13) – and confer Galatians 5:16-17.

We should walk in "good works" (Ephesians 2:10), "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

Do some have the idea that "Christianity" simply requires abstaining from that which is evil, with no concern about doing good, when Scripture says we are created in Christ Jesus for good works?

Jesus called us the "salt of the earth" and "the light of the world", and said, "let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:13-16). Here is instruction looking squarely at our duty for good works, and people are failing in their reason for being if they fall short in this responsibility shared by all (Hebrews 10:24).

We must “walk in wisdom” in our dealings with those who are not in Christ (Colossians 4:5-6; confer Ephesians 5:15). Carelessness in word or deed may slam a door that could have been opened. We need to give thought to “know how you ought to answer each person.” Speaking “the truth in love” does not look at the message, the message is to be “the truth”; it looks at the messenger, and his attitude and handling of the word, to speak that word in the most effective way possible.

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). Understanding “walking in the light” is helped by considering walking in darkness. One does not have to do nothing but sin, to be walking in darkness; he is just indifferent to the light, and sinning as it suits him; and occasionally, maybe, doing something good. By the same token, one does not have to be sinless, to be walking in the light – his aim and preference is to be obeying God, and if he occasionally yields and sins, the blood of Christ will cleanse him.

People who are “in the light” are already acquainted with the blood of Jesus. There is no forgiveness of sins “without the shedding of blood” (Hebrews 9:22); but “it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (Hebrews 10:4). The writer of Hebrews talks about the efficacy of goats’ and bulls’ blood for the purification of the flesh; then asks, “how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (Hebrews 9:13,14). The blood of Christ is the price of forgiveness for every person. It is, therefore, the price of forgiveness for a straying Christian. This is what John is saying, in First John 1:7. We must watch, where we walk. “Blessed is the man, who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly....”

If There Is A God - Why Does He Let Bad Things Happen?

Tommy J. Thornhill | Etna, Arkansas, USA

This is an age-old question. If God exists, why does He permit suffering and evil to exist in the world? In fact, this type question is one of the primary “proofs” used by atheists and agnostics to challenge the existence of God. They challenge the theist (one who believes in God) by pointing to the occurrence of natural calamities, debilitating or fatal diseases, and other tragedies that cause so much suffering, pain, and death, and say, “If there was a God, He wouldn’t permit these things. Therefore I don’t believe in your God.”

Even though I am thoroughly convinced that God exists, and I serve Him whole-heartedly, I have to admit God has not fully revealed His mind in this matter. He has not given us the answers that might satisfy our desires as to why He permits evil and suffering to plague mankind and why He allows the innocent to suffer at the hands of evil doers. I don’t know the answers, for His mind is not mine. God doesn’t answer to us, we answer to Him. “For who has known the mind of the LORD? On who has become His counselor?” (Romans 11:34). He doesn’t think like we do.

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,’ says the Lord, ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts’” (Isaiah 55:8-9).

He has chosen to keep some things to Himself. “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of the law” (Deuteronomy 29:29).

While God has not given us the answers to the question in the title directly, He has given us the ability to think and reason for ourselves, and from a study of His revealed word we can gain some insight as to “why” bad things happen.

But, first, let me say, that when a person says, I won’t believe in God unless He acts in the manner I think He should, this person is being egotistical and selfish. He is putting himself into the position of the Creator,

rather than being the created creature. Paul pointed this out when he wrote, “But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to Him who formed it, ‘Why have you made me like this?’” (Romans 9:20). Man in demanding that God function as he thinks He ought to act, is in a very precarious position. He is trying to shape God into his image, instead of being the clay molded into God’s image (Gen.1:28-29). God pronounces a woe on those who would question Him. “Woe to him, who strives with His Maker! ... Shall the clay say to Him who forms it, what are you making?” (Isaiah 45:9).

With the previous thoughts presented let’s now reason together to find some logical reasons to the question, “If there is a God – why does He let bad things happen?” We might begin with a companion question, “If there is a God – why didn’t He make a world free from pain and suffering?” This is an easy one to answer. HE DID! The world He first created was a perfect world, one free from pain and suffering. When He finished His creation of all things, we read, “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day” (Genesis 1:29).

God then created the first human pair, Adam and Eve, and placed them in a beautiful garden He had prepared for them, the Garden of Eden. This garden was a perfect paradise, a place of wondrous beauty and peace, where there was no pain, no suffering, no death, for in the garden was found the tree of life. But, something happened to spoil this paradise that was free from pain and suffering.

Adam and Eve succumbed to the lies of the devil, who had come to them in the form of a serpent and persuaded them to eat of the one tree God had forbidden them to eat, the tree of knowledge of good and evil. When they did this, the beautiful paradise was spoiled, for sin had entered the world (Genesis 3:6). As a result, they introduced death, both spiritual and physical, upon themselves and all descendants since. Along with death, God decreed that all mankind would also have to suffer materially and physically in this world (Genesis 3:15-19). Along with the curse of sin falling on man, God extended the curse onto the world in which sinful man had to live, and this curse, bringing catastrophes of all kinds on the world, extends even to this day (Romans 8:20-22). The devil had done his work well. Sin had ruined everything. Things were no longer perfect. The taint of sin had spoiled perfection. Imperfect man was now doomed to live in an imperfect world.

But, saying the devil is responsible does not satisfy people who do not believe. So, they ask, “If God is so mighty and good, why did He allow Satan to do this evil work of bringing sin into the world?” Was it because God was not strong enough to keep him out of the garden? If that is the case, then the devil must be a god also, and have equal strength with God almighty. I deny that is the case. The devil is subject to the LORD, and one day he will be punished by being cast into the hell God has prepared from him and all his angels (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10). This is an eternal lake of fire, a place of outer darkness.

The reason God allowed the devil to enter the world and bring sin and misery to mankind was because of something He placed in man when He formed him, something He did not give to the rest of His earthly creation. This is what we refer to as free will, the ability to make choices, to choose to do right or wrong. (to be continued)

God's Own Special People

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

The apostle Peter in this verse tells us that God has a people. Jesus is the One who made it possible for an individual to be a part of this chosen generation, a royal priesthood and a holy nation. He died on the cross so that all could become the Lord’s special people (1 Timothy 2:3-7). There are several things revealed to us about this special people in 1 Peter chapter two. Consider some of them with me.

All the saved begin their life in Christ by being newborn babes (verse 2). Just as a baby desires milk, a spiritual babe should desire the pure milk of the word, so they can grow. The Lord does not expect us to remain babes in Christ but wants us to grow to maturity. The word of God which is the spiritual nourishment needed to grow is provided; one must simply partake of it. Far too many have little or no appetite for this spiritual food thus the reason for the immaturity of so many of the people of God. This was one of the problems in the church at Corinth and may well have been the underlying cause of many of the other issues faced by them as well. "And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:1). God's own special people should grow into mature spiritual adults, who can share His word with others (Hebrews 5:12-14).

As Christians, we are to offer up spiritual sacrifices unto the Lord (verse 5). Whatever the child of God does in submitting unto His will is an offering made to Him. Paul says we are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice unto God (Romans 12:1). We must abstain from fleshly lust which war against the soul (1 Peter 2:11), and yet we are to "Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king" (1 Peter 2:17). Our lips should be used to praise and to thank Jehovah for His great love, His grace and mercy, and the gift of His Son to redeem us from our sins (Hebrews 13:15). As God's own special people, we should be willing to do good and to share with others the good fortune which has been bestowed upon us (Hebrews 13:16). With such sacrifices our Lord is well pleased.

Peter reminds us that we are nothing more than sojourners and pilgrims in this world (verse 11). Both words reflect the temporary nature of our life on earth. We should not become so attached to the things of this world that we lose sight of what is truly important. John says:

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever"
(1 John 2:15-17).

We must lay up treasures in heaven where moth and rust cannot destroy, thieves cannot steal, always being mindful of our eternal abode (Matthew 6:19-21; Colossians 3:1-2). Remember God's people are not at home in this world; we are simply passing through on our way to those mansions above (John 14:1-4).

God's people are obedient (verse 13). This verse tells us we must submit ourselves to every ordinance of man, even those which we may not like. There is one exception to this, when man's law conflicts with the Lord's will (Acts 5:29). Then one must obey God rather than man. It is only the obedient who have been promised to be saved by the grace of our Lord (Matthew 7:21-27; Hebrews 5:8-9). We must submit to every command of God. There is no picking and choosing the ones we want to submit to and ignoring the others. Our attitude must always be "If the Lord said it, I believe it and I am willing to submit myself to it."

Those whom the Lord has chosen to be His people are often faced with suffering (verses 18-24). In every chapter of First Peter, the apostle mentions something about the difficulties faced in life by those who are Christians (1:6; 2:18-21; 3:13-14,17; 4:12-16; 5:9-10). Being a child of God does not exempt us from the suffering that is attached to this world. Yet let us, "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:6-7). These trials will prove the genuineness of our faith and the end result of our faith will be the salvation of our souls (1 Peter 1:3-9).

Are you one of God's own special people? If you are then your conduct will be honorable among those you are around, and the results will be glory to God (verse 12).

A Response to "THE BIBLE VERSUS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST" (5)

William Stewart | Kingston, Ontario, Canada

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Someone recently pointed me to an article claiming to expose the falsehood
of the Church of Christ. We will be responding to the content of the article
over a period of several months. The original article, by James L. Melton,
can be found at www.av1611.org/jmelton/chchurch.html
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Resurrections & Judgments

Melton calls the idea of "a GENERAL resurrection and judgment" for all mankind a "perversion of truth."
Has Melton never read John 5? Notice what Jesus said:

*Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear
His voice and come forth - those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and
those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation (John 5:28-29).*

If that is not "a GENERAL resurrection and judgment" I'm not sure what it is. Jesus said ALL will be
resurrected, both the good and the evil, and they will ALL receive either eternal life or condemnation.

In his next few paragraphs, Melton mentions the 1000 year reign almost a dozen times. He states, "True
Bible-believers take the Pre-Millennial view, which is the correct view, according to the word of God." I'd be
delighted to discuss the pre-millennial theory at length with anyone who wants to do so. But, let me state
this - Revelation 1:1 says the message has been "...sent and signified..." One must understand the figures
and images we encounter in Revelation are signs and symbols. They are not to be taken literally. When we
read about strange creatures in the book, when events happen, when numbers are used - they are not
literal, they are signs. It is faulty to look for literal fulfillment of what has been symbolically presented. The
Jehovah's Witnesses believe only 144,000 people will go to heaven, because they have taken the number
given in Revelation 7:4 and 14:2 literally. And yet they fail to take the rest of the details about the 144,000
literally (male, Jewish, virgins). Those who take the pre-millennial position are guilty of the same. They
make the 1000 years of Revelation 20 literal, and either ignore or misrepresent what the rest of the Bible
says about the reign of Christ in favour of their doctrine.

Speaking before a crowd in His day, Jesus plainly revealed when His reign would begin. He said, "...there
are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power" (Mark
9:1). His reign would not begin two millennia or more in the future, but would begin in the first century (see
Acts 2:30-36; 1 Corinthians 15:25; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 10:12-13). If the reign of Christ was a literal
1000 years, then it would have ceased in the 11th century (ie. 1030 AD), since according to Jesus, Peter
and Paul, the Lord began to reign in the 1st century (ie. 30 AD).

Melton cites a Grover Stevens publication, *The Rapture, Tribulation and Pre-Millennialism*, which states,
"The day of the Lord" in 2 Peter 3:10 is "the day of his coming." Immediately the accusations fly. Mr.
Stevens is "perverting 2 Peter 3:9-10." Mr. Stevens "IGNORES verse 8 and quotes verse 9 and 10 OUT
OF CONTEXT." Melton explains to us why brother Stevens "ignored" verse 8, it is "because verse 8
INCLUDES the 1000 year reign!!" Does it? The verse reads:

But beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a
thousand years as one day (2 Peter 3:8).

Seriously? Melton thinks this is a reference to the 1000 year reign of Christ? True, the phrase "thousand
years" is found, but that doesn't make it a reference to the millennial reign of Christ. If so, does that mean
Psalm 90:4 and Ecclesiastes 6:6 are also reference to the millennial reign? Foolishness!

It is Melton who has ignored the context! Let's summarize it briefly. Scoffers will come in the last days (v
3, cf. Hebrews 1:2), who will mock the idea that Jesus is returning (v 4) for judgment (v 7), claiming that
"all things continue as they were from the beginning." Peter says they "willfully forget" (v 5) about the

judgment (v 6) which came in Noah's day by the flood. The final judgment, which involves the destruction of the heavens and earth, is coming (v 7, cf. v 10-12).

Verse 8 is not about the 1000 year reign of Christ. If that were the case, what's the point of comparing it to "one day"? If it is a literal 1000 years, then it is not one day. Nowhere in the Bible is the 1000 year reign compared to or referred to as "one day." So, what is Peter's point? The apostle is alluding to Psalm 90:4, "...a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night." The scoffers of his day may have objected, "It's been 40 years - he's not coming." Scoffers today might contend, "It's been 1987 years - he's not coming." They mock because it's taking too long. They jeer because they don't believe it's going to happen. Peter's retort - time is nothing before the Lord. We are subject to days and years and centuries and millennia - the Lord is not bound by the clock or the calendar. The final judgment will come when it comes, when the Lord deems the time right. God will not fail to keep His promised judgment (v 9), but is patiently waiting for people to turn to Him.

What does Melton do with 2 Peter 3:8? He says, "one day is as a THOUSAND YEARS in God's eyes, so the 'day of the Lord' can very well INCLUDE the 1000 year reign!" To make room for his pre-millennial theory, Melton ignores the contextual meaning of 2 Peter 3:8, and conveniently redefines the "day." The Bible doesn't speak of the 1000 year reign as "one day" that lasts for a 1000 years.

Melton disparagingly infers that Revelation 20:5 "is NEVER quoted by the Church of Christ." Overstatements and lies are not becoming. The discussion of the first resurrection spans Revelation 20:4-6. The first resurrection is not a literal resurrection, as Melton believes. It is a figure used to refer to spiritual life (John 5:24-25; 11:26; Ephesians 2:1-5; 5:14; Colossians 2:13). Those who obey the Lord have received the first resurrection. Revelation 20:6 says the second death (eternal destruction, hell) has no power over them. However, Revelation 20:5 says the rest of the dead (spiritually dead) are not raised, that is, they do not have spiritual life. They have no part in the first resurrection which is affected by obedience to the gospel.

Melton ends this topic with one final accusation, "...the Church of Christ OMITTS the Millennium altogether, making the First Resurrection and the Second Death one and the same." Absolutely not! The first resurrection is about rising to "newness of life" (Romans 6:3-5), it is a reference to spiritual life. The second death is the condemnation that will come to the wicked at the final judgment. They most certainly are not the same thing.

God's Promise to Abraham

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God spoke with Abraham in Genesis 12 and made some great promises that would not only affect the rest of his life, but the lives of everyone that would come after Abraham. God made a three-fold promise to Abraham: 1) land, 2) God would make from Abraham a great nation, and 3) Abraham would be a blessing to all the families of the earth. These promises began to be fulfilled in the life of Abraham, but were never fully brought to fruition during his day (Hebrews 11:13). So God reiterated these promises to Isaac, Abraham's son (Genesis 26:3-5), and to Jacob, the chosen son of Isaac (Genesis 28:13-15).

After the descendants of Abraham were living in Egypt, the Israelites were multiplying at such a fast rate the Egyptians were fearful of them (Exodus 1:9, 20). Egypt was no slouch from a military standpoint, neither were they a small nation. So considering the children of Israel were greater in number, the Egyptians enslaved them. The descendants of Israel were being formed into a great and mighty people on the earth. Moses eventually led the Hebrews out of Egypt to go to the land God had promised Abraham. The number of the men (20 years old and older, who were able to fight) that came out of Egypt were 603,550. This number excluded women, children under the age of 20, and those who were unable to fight due to reason of age, disease, or some other ailment. Also, the tribe of Levi was excluded from the number that came out of Egypt. So the over half a million men that were numbered, was just a fraction of the

people that came up out of Egypt. God was delivering His promise to make a great nation from the descendants of Abraham.

Eventually the children of Israel were given the promised land of Canaan. The Scripture records that God was faithful to fulfill His promises:

“So the LORD gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it... Not one of the good promises which the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass” (Joshua 21:43, 45).

God had formed from one man, and one tribe on the earth, a great nation which now possessed a land to live in. God was fulfilling His promises to Israel, and not one of them had failed.

There is much debate about the land of Israel and whether God has fulfilled all His promises to Israel. Premillennial doctrine teaches that God is not done with Israel and that He will restore to them the land. They argue that Joshua 21:43-45 was not a complete satisfaction of the promise to Abraham. God promised Abraham the land from the Euphrates all the way down to Egypt (Genesis 15:18). During the reign of Solomon, Israel's borders and rule extended from the Euphrates River to the border of Egypt (2 Chronicles 9:26). God was faithful to complete His promises.

However, Israel was unfaithful to God and committed gross sin by accepting the idols of the Canaanites. Moses warned Israel of God's wrath and punishment by using other nations to conquer Israel if they were unfaithful. God warned of the future destruction and captivities by the Assyrians and Babylonians. Israel would be scattered among the nations and the land would be desolate (Leviticus 26:32-34). Deuteronomy chapters 28 and 29 show the plagues which would be brought against Israel for her disobedience.

There was also the promise of restoration, though. God would deal graciously with Israel even after their sin and captivity. Moses said, “then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you” (Deuteronomy 30:3). God restored the land to Israel. Cyrus issued a decree that Jews could leave Babylon to go back and build the temple (2 Chronicles 36:22-23). Artaxerxes allowed Nehemiah to go back to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls of the city. The book of Nehemiah emphasizes the restoration of Israel in the land of Canaan. The restoration of Israel to the land was fulfilled.

The promise of the Seed of Abraham that would bless all nations was yet to be fulfilled. Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of that promise. Thus, He is the “son of David, the son of Abraham,” (Matthew 1:1; cf. Luke 3:31, 34). The apostle Paul argued the promise to Abraham regarding the seed that would bless all nations was in reference to Christ (Galatians 3:16). Through the Seed (Christ) the blessing of Abraham has come upon Jew and Gentile (Galatians 3:14). Salvation has been accomplished through Jesus of Nazareth.

God has been faithful to all of His promises and has done exactly as He said He would. Through God and the promises He made to Abraham all nations and all peoples of the earth might be blessed and enjoy the salvation from God.

The Scope of the Atonement

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The death of Christ is the only hope for lost humanity. If He died for all mankind without exception or limitation, then all lost sinners may in reality look to Jesus for salvation (John 3:14-15). If not, then only those individuals whom God has predestined to life can seek salvation in the Son, and the rest are doomed to irremediable, eternal despair. I believe and teach: **The Scriptures teach that Christ died for all lost humans without exception or limitation.**

I will follow a principle of Bible study stated by the great Calvinistic theologian Charles Hodge: “... it is the duty of the theologian to subordinate his theories to the Bible, and teach not what seems to him to be true

or reasonable, but simply what the Bible teaches” (Hodge. 2:559). This simply means we must elevate divine revelation above human wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:18 - 2:13). Thus, I will only reference those passages which explicitly state universal atonement. These passages may be divided into two categories: those that say Christ died for “all” and the ones which state He died for the “world.”

Jesus Died for “All”

First the scriptures that state Jesus died for “all.” I realize the word “all” is limited by its context. But unless the context does limit the term, it is universal. In other words, it means **“all lost humans without exception or limitation.”**

“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.”“This He said, signifying by what death He would die” (John 12:32-33).

Jesus’ death was for the purpose of drawing “all peoples” to Him. The “world” of verse 31 is a specific reference to the non-elect. “Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.” Rather than limiting the “all peoples” to the elect, the context specifically demands that the phrase refers to **“all lost humans without exception or limitation.”**

Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life (Romans 5:18).

The “all” who may be righteous as the result of Jesus’ sacrifice is as broad as the “all” condemned by sin. In other words, Jesus **“died for all lost humans without exception or limitation.”**

For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

The Lord died for as many as died. “All lost humans without exception or limitation” have died spiritually. Therefore, **“Christ died for all lost humans without exception or limitation.”**

“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time” (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

The “all” for whom Christ died are the “all” God desires to be saved (verses 3-4). In context, “all” of 1 Timothy 2:3-6 refers to everyone lost, whether elect or condemned (verses 1-2).

“For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe” (1 Timothy 4:10).

God is the “Savior” in that, among other things, He sent His Son to die on the cross for our redemption. The “all” for whom He is Savior is a larger group than “those who believe.” Thus, **“Christ died for all lost humans without exception or limitation.”**

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone (Hebrews 2:9).

The “everyone” for whom Jesus tasted death includes the elect (verses 10-13) but is not limited to them. Rather, it includes **“all lost humans without exception or limitation.”**

The World

The second set of passages state that Christ died for the “world.” Certainly the term “world” is often used in a limited sense, but when so used it denotes the wicked in contrast with the elect (John 12:31; 15:19). Will anyone contend that God’s saving love is for the wicked but not for the elect?

“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’” (John 1:29)

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:16-17).

“Then they said to the woman, ‘Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world’” (John 4:42).

“For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world” (John 6:33).

The “world” for whom Jesus is the bread of life includes those who refuse to believe Him (verses 32, 36). Jesus is the “bread of life” in that He gave His “flesh ... for the life of the world” (verse 51).

“And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world” (John 12:47).

The “world” Jesus came to save includes both those who believe Him (verse 46) and those who reject Him (verse 48). Though He did not come the first time to judge the “world” (verse 47), one day, by His Word, He will judge the “world” (verse 48). The “world” He will judge includes both the saved and condemned (John 5:22-29).

“Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).

The “world” God is reconciling to Himself in Christ is the “all” who died (verses 14-15).

“My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. “And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world” (1 John 2:1-2).

The “whole world” for whom Jesus Christ is the “propitiation” (verse 2) is a larger group than those for whom He is Advocate (verse 1).

“And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world” (1 John 4:14).

Jesus is not only “the propitiation for our sins” (verse 10), He is also the “Savior of the world,” a “world” larger than the group for whom He is Advocate.

These fifteen passages emphatically, plainly state Christ died for “all,” i.e., for the “world.” If the Lord had wanted to teach that the scope of the atoning sacrifice of His Son is universal, unlimited, among lost, human sinners, how could He have more emphatically and plainly stated it? **The Scriptures teach that Christ died for all lost humans without exception or limitation.**

Hodge, Charles, **Systematic Theology.**



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