



September 2022

Editor, Keith Sharp

Designer, William Stewart



- unless otherwise noted, answers to questions by Keith Sharp -

In This Issue...

- **Psalm 122:9** | *Albert Barnes*
- **Marital Separation Is Sinful** | *Pat Donahue*
- **So You Want to Be a Preacher: Pride, or Humility, Which Shall it Be?** | *Jefferson David Tant*
- **Needed Characteristics** | *Jim Mickells*
- **The Counsels of Our Heart** | *Mike Thomas*
- **All Things Work Together For Good : Is That Really What It Means?** | *William Stewart*
- **This Same Jesus** | *Jeff Asher*
- **Revelations About Revelation** | *Roger G. Mattingly*
- **Understanding the Revelation : A Reply to "Revelations About Revelation"** | *Bruce Reeves*
- **The Kingdom of God** | *Keith Sharp*

Finally, brethren

WHATEVER THINGS

are true
are noble
are just
are pure
are lovely

PHILIPPIANS 4:8

are of good report
IF THERE IS ANY VIRTURE AND IF THERE IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY –
meditate on these things.

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 christstheway.com.

Psalm 122:9

Albert Barnes, 19th century Presbyterian scholar
Notes on the Psalms

"Because of the house of the LORD our God I will see your good."

"This expresses a deep feeling in the mind of a pious man. To him the church of God is the most important of all objects, gives the principal interest to a place, and is everywhere to him the chief attraction. The church does more to adorn a place than anything else; it is that which exerts the best influence on a place, and sends the best influence abroad; it is that which to him is the source of chief comfort and delight. His heart is there; his main delight is there; his arrangements will be made so as best to enjoy the privileges of the sanctuary; and his plans of life will all contemplate the welfare, the extension, and the influence of the church of God. It is religion which in his view is the chief ornament of a place; religion which in any community is the principal fountain of its happiness and prosperity; religion which is the central and controlling influence on the private dwellings, and the public institutions, of a nation" (Albert Barnes, Notes on the Psalms).

Marital Separation Is Sinful

Pat Donahue | Harvest, Alabama, USA

Except in the case of divorce for fornication (Matthew 5:32), marital separation is sinful. God really does expect us to follow through on our vow “till death do us part.”

We know this because 1 Corinthians 7:10 tells the wife not to “depart from her husband.” The word translated “depart” here is *chorizo* and according to Thayer means “to separate, divide, part, put asunder, to separate one’s self from, to depart.” This is not the same Greek word for divorce (*apoluo*). Plainly put then a wife is not to depart from her husband. The **ASV** and **NKJV** also have “depart” here. The **ESV**, **RSV**, and **NIV** have “separate.” The **NASB** has “leave.” From these translations it should be clear what 1 Corinthians 7:10 is forbidding. Of course it also is forbidding divorce because divorces legally facilitate separations, but the verse specifically forbids separation ... even if no legal divorce takes place.

We know this also because of 1 Corinthians 7:3-5, which reads

“Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.”

Sexual separation then is only allowed for a couple for a temporary period of time, agreed upon by both parties, for the purpose of fasting and prayer. The reason given for this is so “that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.” Couples who maritally separate are not satisfying their sexual obligations to each other and therefore tend to cause their spouse undue temptation to be satisfied elsewhere. To transgress this passage is sin (1 John 3:4) just like transgressing any other passage.

We also know marital separation is sinful because Matthew 19:6b instructs, “Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate” (**NKJV**). Of course it is wrong to divorce, but this verse specifically says even separation is wrong. The **ESV**, **NIV**, and **NASB** also have “separate” here. The **KJV**, **RSV**, and **ASV** have “put asunder.” So the standard translations make clear what is forbidden here.

And we know marital separation is sinful because 1 Peter 3:7 commands the husband to “dwell” with his wife “according to knowledge.” The emphasis here is “according to knowledge,” but it is impossible to dwell with your wife according to knowledge if you are not dwelling with her period.

Does “situation ethics” change this law in any respect? Let’s not advocate “evil, that good may come” (Romans 3:8).

So You Want to be a Preacher...

Pride, or Humility, Which Shall it Be?

Jefferson David Tant | Hendersonville, Tennessee, USA

Some might think that is a dumb question. They would answer with a positive, “Humility!” Yet while there might be pretty universal agreement with that answer, unfortunately not all preachers act that way. But this is not a new phenomenon among religious leaders.

We can go back to the 1st Century and see what was going on during the time Christ was on the earth. We know the Pharisees were among the religious leaders of his day, and not all were exactly humble. Consider Jesus’ rebuke of the Pharisees in Matthew 23:5-12:

“But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries, and lengthen the tassels of their garments. And they love the place of honor at banquets, and the chief seats in the synagogues and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called by men, Rabbi. But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ.

But the greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.”

We obviously connect that passage with Catholic “priests” who insist that they be called “Father,” but there are other applications just from the context of what Christ said.

I have known of preachers who like to be called “Pastor,” as the denominations do, even though they do not meet the qualifications that Paul gave concerning elders/pastors/shepherds in First Timothy 3 and Titus 1. And some like to be called “Doctor,” even though they do not have a medical degree nor an educational degree. But I guess it makes them feel special.

I have known preachers who are offended if anyone disagrees with them when they are teaching a Bible class, or mentions another view. How dare anyone question a learned Bible scholar!

If anyone would have the right to feel deserving of honor, we might think of Paul. After all, he was a scholar, probably possessed a Doctor of Divinity from the noted school of Gamaliel, and he was also an apostle. And while the office of an apostle carried authority with it, yet as a person Paul exhibited a sense of humility. Note what he wrote to Timothy as he reflected on his past life: “Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (1 Timothy 1:15).

And it seems our Lord had some words for us on the matter of humility. “Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:4). “And whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted” (Matthew 23:12). “...and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time” (1 Peter 5:5b-6) “Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5).

And consider what Jesus said about himself: “Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:29).

Respect comes not from demanding respect, but from acting so as to deserve it.

Needed Characteristics

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

Members of the Lord’s church often hear preachers plead from the pulpit about giving book, chapter, and verse for all we believe and practice in religion. One of the pleas of the restoration movement was, “I will speak where the Bible speaks, and I will be silent where the Bible is silent.” Words are often spoken about restoring New Testament Christianity. This certainly is what God tells us to do (1 Peter 4:11; 1 Corinthians 1:10; Hebrews 7:12-14, etc.). Yet I believe there are some things sorely missing in the lives of some who claim to be followers of the Bible in all they believe and practice. Notice at least three things badly needed among the people of God today.

Zeal: When we first read of the New Testament church being established on Pentecost, the Bible says, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). In Thayer’s Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament, he defines the word “steadfastly” as “to give constant attention to a thing.” They were busy serving the Lord (Acts 2:46). When persecution arose against them, they were scattered, yet they went everywhere preaching the good news about our Lord and Savior (Acts 8:1-4). One of the reasons the Lord was adding to the church daily was because of their zealous efforts, along with apostles, in pointing others to Christ (Acts 2:47). Does it make you wonder how much more work could be accomplished for the Lord if each member of all the churches of Christ scattered throughout the world had this same kind of zeal? How much deeper would one’s Bible

knowledge be? How much stronger would everyone be as the result of their prayer life? How much more hospitality would be shown? How many more people would be led to Jesus for their salvation? O, that all of us had this same type of zeal for the Lord as these early Christians.

Joy. Serving God is drudgery to some. I have heard it said, "Some have just enough religion to make themselves miserable." They find no joy in coming to worship services. There is no hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matthew 5:6). They do not rejoice in singing praises to God while teaching and admonishing their fellow servants (Colossians 3:16). There is no cheerfulness in their giving back to God as He has prospered them (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). Prayers to the Lord are not from a heart filled with thankfulness while humbly seeking His aid and rejoicing they have such privileges. When partaking of the Lord's Supper their thoughts may be on some other event, failing to appreciate what immense love was shown to them through this great sacrifice. Christians should be the happiest people on all the earth, instead some look like they have been weaned on a pickle. We have so much to be grateful for. Paul told the Philippians, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4) All servants of the Lord need the same kind of joy which David possessed when he came to worship, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the LORD'" (Psalm 122:1). If one's attitude is gladness when he comes for worship, then he will leave the building filled with joy ready to always serve Jehovah.

Boldness: It is very easy to be intimidated by others and not say what needs to be said and in the way it needs to be revealed. Peter and John spoke with great boldness as they stood before the Jewish rulers in Acts 4. The text says, "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus" (verse 13). These leaders commanded the apostles not to speak or teach in the name of our Lord again or else they would suffer the consequences of their action (Acts 4:16-18). Yet Peter and John said, "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). One of the reasons why many may lack boldness in defending and revealing the gospel to others may well be their deficiency in the knowledge of the Bible. One is not quick to open their mouth on a subject with which they are not familiar. All need to spend time in the study of God's word (2 Timothy 2:15), so they are equipped to provide an answer when someone ask about the hope they have (1 Peter 3:15). May we all be ready to "...to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). However one must always speak the truth in love; love for the Lord, love of the truth, and a love for the souls of men and women which are lost.

May we never give up our fight against religious error, always demanding book, chapter, and verse for all we say and do in matters of religion. Yet it should be our hope and prayer we see the need to manifest the same type characteristics which faithful Christians had in the New Testament. May God help us to be zealous, filled with joy, and have great boldness and plainness of speech.

The Counsels of Our Heart

Mike Thomas | Bowling Green, Kentucky, USA

Paul said when the Lord comes, He will "bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts" (1 Corinthians 4:5). Other translations say He will "disclose the motives of human hearts" (NASB) and "make known the secret purposes of people's hearts" (NCV). This goes well with a famous verse from Ecclesiastes, "For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil" (12:14). Imagine that. Every secret thought, every intent, and every idea we let reside in our heart will be exposed by God on the Day of Judgment. Nothing is "hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4:13). "So then each of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12). That should move us to examine ourselves daily to see if we sincerely love God from the heart. Remember, it was when the "Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" that He judged mankind the first time (Genesis 6:5). That proves He is able to see our thoughts and pass judgment. He told Samuel, when the prophet was convinced the next king of Israel should be Eliab, the good-looking brother of David:

“Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

We can know that God is measuring us from the inside out. He is looking to see if we truly walk with Him in the thoughts and “motives” of our heart. It could be, we are taking counsel from ideas that hinder our relationship with Him.

Pride

Do we think too highly of ourselves and focus on ourselves more than we should? Namely, are we overly concerned with being praised by others? Paul knew better than to do that. He said:

“But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord” (1 Corinthians 4:3).

He mentioned that because he did not want the Corinthians to think too highly of him or Apollos – “that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written” (verse 6). The final say in all matters of judgment is our Lord, whose word will evaluate us on the last Day (John 12:48). Because of that, Paul dissuaded the Corinthians from gloating over him or from thinking more of him than they should. The ultimate appraiser of humanity is not in the consensus of the masses or even in one’s own opinion of himself. “For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord” (1 Corinthians 4:4). God alone is the “judge of all” (Hebrews 12:23).

Hate

Are we over-critical of others? Jesus told His faultfinders, “But if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless” (Matthew 12:7). He was teaching them to change their attitude toward Him by remembering the kindness of God, who desires “mercy and not sacrifice.” They could continue looking for defects in Him (as vain as that was) and function on hate, suspicion, and bitterness. Or they could humble themselves, open their eyes, and learn to extend mercy in the same manner as God. Either way, the choice was theirs. This is ultimately what Jesus meant when He said:

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:38-39).

Every aspect of God’s will leads us to act in love for Him and in love for others. There will never be any other motive required of us or permitted in us. Had the Pharisees given themselves to better counsel, they would “not have condemned the guiltless” or trusted in themselves as the benchmark of righteousness. They would have instead seen the righteous works of Jesus and learned to trust His judgment. May God give us the wisdom to do the same with those we despise, dislike, or resent. Whenever this counsel enters our heart, along with bitterness and malice, let us remember the thoughts of God, who desires mercy and not sacrifice. He will never encourage us to think the worst in people or run wild with our suspicions.

Anxiety

Do we think too negatively of ourselves? Are we filled with fear, worry, regret, and shame? Could it be that the counsel of our heart has not yet learned to accept God’s mercy or trust in His willingness to provide? At what point will we finally humble ourselves before “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)? What do those words mean if not to tell us to give all of our troubles to Him to help us bear them? Instead, we overwhelm ourselves with heavy burdens and fears—convinced that our future is hopeless. Such a pity, especially when our Creator is willing to be by our side. Alas, good friends:

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).

Flesh

Perhaps the counsel of our heart leads us to dwell on carnal pleasures. Peter said some will have eyes “full of adultery” because of a “heart trained in covetous practices” (2 Peter 2:14). Like the prophet of old warned, “Woe to those who devise iniquity, and work out evil on their beds! At morning light they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand” (Micah 2:1). If this is our struggle, we should consider whose counsel we are following – the Spirit (through the Word) or the flesh (through our desires). There is no middle ground with God on this matter. “For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Romans 8:6).

God

With all the types of counsel that can define us, let us set our mind on things above, not on things on the earth, and anticipate the reward that awaits those who serve God from the heart. Against such there is no law!

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly...But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night...For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish” (Psalm 1:1-6).

All Things Work Together For Good

IS THAT REALLY WHAT IT MEANS?

William Stewart | Odessa, Ontario, Canada

In 3 John 1:2, we read:

...I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.

This simple greeting from John to Gaius has been the heart of a movement known as the health and wealth gospel. Prosperity preachers make much more of it than he intended, twisting his words to give undue focus on carnal things rather than spiritual.

One "name it and claim it" speaker has affirmed,

"God created every one of us to be successful. Before the foundation of the world, He laid out an exact plan for our lives. And in this plan He has moments of favor that will come across our paths. These moments are not ordinary. They are destiny-altering moments." (1)

The same writer tells us,

"It's God's will for you to live in prosperity instead of poverty." (2)

I'm not suggesting God wants us to fail or starve to death or anything like that, but long life, good health, and financial abundance are not promised to believers as these false teachers suggest. The message of the Bible is about the forgiveness of sins and the hope of heaven, not physical health and wealth.

Among the verses hijacked to support this prosperity doctrine is Romans 8:28. It reads:

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

It is a great promise! No matter how bad things look, if we love God, if we are the called, if we are focused on His purpose for our lives, then He will work everything out in our favour. But what does Paul mean by this? What does he mean by "good"? Some seem to think it means all our desires, preferences, pleasures, comforts, and wants will be showered upon us. As appealing as that may sound to some, it is a misuse and abuse of what Paul wrote.

We need to look at the context of Romans 8:28. We're going to go larger than the usual 15 verses we have emphasized in our series. In fact, we're going to look at the entire chapter.

Those who are in Christ must walk in the Spirit, not in the flesh. We are called to live according to the law of the Spirit, the gospel, not according to the carnal desires that we might have. The health and wealth gospel is about fleshly desires. Its appeal is to the carnal mind. Notice:

...the carnal mind is enmity against God... (8:7)

v 14-17 - relationship

Those who walk according to the Spirit are led by the Spirit (v 14), and are adopted as children of God. As we follow His word and focus on the spiritual, not the carnal, His Spirit is able to bear witness with our spirit that we belong to Him.

Surely if we are children of God, who is Creator of all things, He'll bless us with whatever our hearts desire, right? We are heirs of God (v 17), yet the focus is not on physical things that will perish, but on eternity. We will be glorified with Christ AFTER we have suffered with Him. Prosperity preachers don't talk about suffering - it's not a popular message.

v 18-30 - while we wait

In this life, we are going to suffer. Paul wrote:

...all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. (2 Timothy 3:12)

The glory that awaits us is so great that the sufferings of this life for the Lord will seem as nothing (2 Corinthians 4:17).

Paul gives a beautiful description in this section of our text of the anticipation of God's people being received into heaven. Not only do we eagerly await it, but the whole creation is pictured as waiting for us to realize the hope of God's people - heaven. It is not about the good things in this life, but "the adoption, the redemption of our body" in eternity.

v 31-39 - victory in Jesus

The "name it and claim it" folks are focused on physical blessings. As a child of God, I should be swimming in prosperity, right? Look at the types of things Paul said would come to the children of God:

...tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword... (8:35)

If we serve Christ faithfully, some people will be against us (v 31), they will accuse us (v 33), and condemn us (v 34). How does this play out in life? Many in the first century were put to death for their service to Christ. How exactly does that fit into the health and wealth doctrine?

The Lord will work all things out for our good; not our physical good, but our spiritual good. The context of Romans 8:28 calls for spiritual living, a willingness to suffer for the faith, and in the end, victory with our Lord in heaven (v 17, 37).

(1) Joel Osteen, It's Your Time

(2) Joel Osteen, Your Best Life Now

This Same Jesus

Jeff Asher | Nacogdoches, Texas, USA

I think it's important that you know what Paul saw on the road to Damascus. Hear him in 1 Corinthians 15:

"Moreover brethren. I declare unto you the gospel I preached unto you, which also you have received and wherein you stand, by which also you are saved, if you keep in memory what I preached into you, unless you have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures, that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures: and that he was seen of Cephas (or Peter - J.A.) then of the Twelve (without Thomas - J.A.): and after that, he was seen of about 500 brethren at once of whom the greater part

remain present, but some are fallen asleep (that is they have died in Christ - J.A.). After that he was seen of James (evidently the Lord's "brother" - J.A.) then of all the apostles (that's when Thomas was present - J.A.). And last of all, he was seen of me."

Wait a minute. What? And last of all, "He," which "He" is he talking about? Paul is talking about the crucified, buried, resurrected, glorified Son of God. Paul saw the resurrected Christ. He saw what Peter, James, the Twelve and the 500 saw, exactly the same thing. When Jesus appeared to the Twelve; He said, "see Me, handle Me, it is I Myself." And when he appeared to the Twelve including Thomas, and Thomas had said, "I'll not believe unless I put my fingers into the prints of the nails in His hand and thrust my hand into His side." Jesus said to Thomas, "Come here, be no longer faithless, but believing, put your finger into the prints of the nails in my hand and thrust your hand into my side." If Paul didn't see that, then Paul is a liar. Paul saw the resurrected Jesus.

There's no doubt in my mind that Paul knew who Jesus was. What did he know? The Gospel. He knew what was claimed of Him. He knew that He had preached and said He was the son of God. And he knew the reason why the Jews killed him. He may or may not have been present at the trials or the crucifixion. I don't know, but Jerusalem was his city. He knew these things. As he said to Agrippa (Acts 26), "These things are not done in a corner." Saul was fully aware of who and what Jesus claimed to be and what had happened to Jesus. The Lord said to Him, "I have appeared unto you to make you a witness." A witness of what? A witness of the resurrection. And he says, I saw Him, that is the resurrected Christ.

You see, I fully believe that Jesus was raised from the dead and that He ascended into heaven in His glorified body. He did not cast His body off. He didn't hang it up in a closet somewhere. He ascended in that glorified body into heaven as recorded in Acts chapter one. The angels are standing by, as Jesus is ascending into heaven. They say, "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven." The "same Jesus" with Whom they had just walked out to the Mount of Olives, the One Whom they had handled and seen and watched and had placed their hands into his side and handled the prints of the nails in His hands. The Angel said that Jesus, this "same Jesus" shall come again.

When Peter stood up to preach on Pentecost, he said, "Let the whole house of Israel know that this same Jesus who you crucified" (Acts 2:36). What Jesus was Peter talking about? This was the Jesus Peter affirmed was resurrected from the dead in fulfillment of Bible prophecy spoken by David from whom Jesus descended (Acts 2:32). It is the "same Jesus" resurrected from the dead that in His uncorrupted flesh sat upon the throne of David (Acts 2:30). It is the "same Jesus" who was "the fruit" of David's loins "according to the flesh." If the Christ born of the flesh of David and crucified by these Jews was not raised and entered Heaven to sit on David's throne, then every one of these Old Testament prophecies have failed.

Now, some people have a hard time accepting that (Acts 17:32), but that's what the Bible teaches: Jesus died for our sin and was raised for our justification and ascended into heaven. There He reigns on David's throne as King of Kings and the One Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5). I said Jesus was raised and ascended into His glory (cf. Luke 24:26; John 7:39; 12:16). You ask me how He did this? I don't know; I'm not in the business of explaining what God didn't explain. But I know this, I am not about to deny the resurrection of Jesus Christ because some people find it difficult to understand how it was done.

Now, why is this important? It is important because Paul says our resurrection is like that of Jesus, "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20). If we are not raised as Christ was raised (bodily), then He is either not the firstfruits, or we are not the harvest (cf. Leviticus 23:10).

Paul is quite clear that our resurrection is like that of Christ (read the entire context, paying particular attention to the phrase "the resurrection of the dead" (1 Corinthians 15:21, 42). Paul identifies the physical

body that is buried with that which is raised (1 Corinthians 15:35–36; cf. John 12:23–24). Notice that he says, “It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption” (1 Corinthians 15:42–44). The “it” that is sown is the “it” that is raised. There is an identity, a continuity between the two. Just like the potato eye that is sown is consumed and transformed into a beautiful flowering potato vine (“You do not sow that body that shall be...”), so we are raised changed, but not exchanged.

It is sown in dishonor, what is sown in dishonor? It is sown in weakness, what is sown in weakness? It is sown a natural body, what is sown a natural body? The body that is sown is the body that is raised. It is raised incorruptible, with honor and power. It is raised a spiritual body.

Paul says there is a natural body and there is a spiritual body and that’s what Jesus had. Jesus had, the natural body, and His natural body was changed into a spiritual body in the resurrection. The whole point of 1 Corinthians 15 is to know that we too will have a spiritual body like His.

First that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. Christ was made like His brethren in all things (Philippians 2:7; Hebrews 2:17) so that we might bear the image of the heavenly (1 Corinthians 15:46–48).

I had a young man tell me one time (almost 30 years ago), “I don’t like this body.” Well, I’m not very fond of it either these days. It has aches, pains, sickness, weakness, and arthritis. But if that is what you take away from this, you are not paying attention. Paul is clear, “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” Brother, all things are possible with God” (Luke 18:27; Genesis 18:14; Jeremiah 32:27). He will take this mortal, corruptible body and change it into an immortal, incorruptible body. It will not be recreated (as the Watchtower teaches). It will not be exchanged for a different body (as some of my brethren and the sectarians teach). Neither will it be cast off, left in the grave, for the spirit to enter eternity naked (as the 70 A.D. brethren imply, but 2 Corinthians 5:1–3).

The problem is we are thinking about these things in material terms. I believe at least two things (I am sure there is much more) will be accomplished in the resurrection. First, I expect to be completely released from everything that has to do with the material carnality and the lust of this world (Romans 2:7, 10). I believe that is a promise we have. Second, in the resurrection I will begin thinking about things the way God thinks about them. Do we not understand we will not be concerned about what our body looks like? If it’s eternal, that’s all that I’m interested in. If it’s heavenly, fit for heaven, that’s all I’m interested in. If that’s not true, I’m going to quit preaching. That’s what the Book says. We need to accept that. That is what Paul saw. He saw the Jesus who was raised. He saw the Jesus who was crucified, buried, resurrected, and glorified.

Revelations About Revelation

Roger G. Mattingly | Lleida, Catalunya, Spain

I’m not a preacher and I’ve certainly never written a commentary. However, in all my years of being a Christian, most brotherhood commentaries that I’ve read on the book of Revelation were based on the notion that it was written around 95 or 96 AD, and mostly focused on God’s judgement of the Roman Empire, Rome in particular. One such commentary states, “The purpose of the book is to reveal through symbols the nature and the character of the great conflict breaking forth between the forces of God and of Satan.” It goes on to say, “The book is designed to encourage Christians to be faithful in the face of all opposition and persecution, regardless how terrible the onslaught may be.”

If that truly is the substance of this book and nothing more, then it really doesn’t matter whether the book is assigned an early or late date of writing. And it matters even less whether the forces of evil described therein allude to Jerusalem, Rome, or some other city. On the other hand, if the purpose and meaning of the book are substantially different from what is being regularly taught, then it might matter a great deal!

Also doubting the interpretational abilities of many of those who've presented sermons and classes on the same book, I've spent a good deal of time searching in vain for a few words or phrases that I thought might unlock the book's mystery. But somehow, they just kept eluding me. Then, a little under two years ago, a commentary entitled, *The Avenging of the Apostles and Prophets* by Arthur M. Ogden (a gospel preacher) came to my attention. I found it to be a most welcome and unique study containing a plethora of insightful comments about the purpose and organization of Revelation which, for me, has been like a bright torch shining down a dark path. And yes, I was right! There are indeed several passages that help us to correctly understand John's prophetic visions. Although it was conveyed in signs and colorful imagery, the judgment that it foretold actually concerned the approaching end of the Jewish age, in 70 A.D., about which the prophet Daniel, and others, had written (Daniel 9:23-27; 12:1-13). In the gospel accounts, Jesus had also prophesied regarding that ominous event, providing warnings and detailed information about the end days and the destruction of the temple itself (Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21).

"And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said, "As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down"
(Luke 21:5-6, **NASB**).

In Matthew 23:29-39, He also provided a reason for the future desolation:

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, 'If we had been living in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' So you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers. You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell? Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

The statement, "Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers." is similar to Genesis 15:16, when God had said that the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet complete. In other words, Jesus was saying that the Jews were not quite as guilty of sin as their fathers had been, but they certainly would be eventually. The key clauses to be highlighted here relate to "judgment," "shedding the blood of the prophets," and "upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth," which explains most of what is happening in Revelation and why.

A side note: Bear in mind that there are often multiple reasons for why things happen throughout the book of Revelation — some of which are not so apparent. For example, Satan deceived the Romans into going after the Jews because he wanted the Romans to kill all the Christians who were living among them. He did this by coming up with the idea of emperor worship, or forced worship of the beast (Revelation 12 & 13). The Jews revolted against this, among other things, in late 66 A.D. and nearly wiped out a legion of Roman soldiers. The Romans then went after the Jews, resulting in the siege on Jerusalem.

Yet, Revelation 17:17 says, "For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God should be fulfilled."

Anyway, getting back on topic, in Matthew 23:36, "all these things which would come upon that generation"

were the same “things which must shortly take place” recorded in Revelation (Revelation 1:1-3].” Jesus also said that they would be “days of vengeance” (Luke 21:20-22).

Scanning Revelation and comparing our findings with the gospel accounts, the link between them becomes obvious: “and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” (Revelation 6:9-10)

“And I heard the angel of the waters saying, “Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things; for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it” (Revelation 16:5-6).

“Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her” (Revelation 18:20). “And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth” (Revelation 18:24). “...because His judgments are true and righteous; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and He has avenged the blood of His bond-servants on her” (Rev. 19:2).

In Revelation 17 there is the vision of the woman who was sitting on a scarlet beast. She was not the beast, but she was sitting on it.

“The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality, and on her forehead a name was written, a mystery, ‘BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.’ And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus.”

From Matthew 23:32, the “fill up, then the measure” phrase has become “the woman’s cup was full of abominations.” Moreover, it was this woman, Babylon, that was drunk with the blood of the saints! There can be no doubt, Jerusalem was the great city and the mother of harlots being described in these passages, not Rome.

Other links tying Jerusalem to Revelation can also be easily recognized and understood. Chapter 11:1 confirms that the “holy city” being “tread under foot” was Jerusalem. Where else would the temple of God be located? An obvious answer. And verse 8 speaks of the dead bodies of the two witnesses (Law of Moses and the Prophets) who lie in the street of the great city...“where also their Lord was crucified.” The Lord was crucified in Jerusalem, not Rome.

So then, what the book of Revelation does is to prophesy the start, progression, and finish of the lasting judgment that God had determined would come upon the Jewish nation, and secular history testifies that it did come in 70 AD. Speaking from a more informed viewpoint than the one I held previously, I now know that those who tenaciously cling to the untenable late date assignment for the writing of Revelation will never understand the book’s true purpose and meaning. “Why is that?”, you might ask.

Because, a book of prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem has no value if it was written after the event has already occurred. And, a book of prophecy about the destruction of Rome has no value if its fulfillment can never be definitively verified.

Understanding the Revelation

A Reply to "Revelations About Revelation"

Bruce Reeves | Conway, Arkansas, USA

Much is at stake when it comes to our understanding of the book of Revelation. There are good and faithful brethren who have differed on the dating of the book who agree that the doctrines of Full Preterism are heretical and false. The Bible clearly teaches that there will be a future, bodily resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1-58; Philippians 3:20-21), literal return of Christ (Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), actual destruction of the world (2 Peter 3:1-18), and eternal conscious punishment in hell (Matthew 25:46; 2

Thessalonians 1:6-9). In this response, however, I will be reviewing a recent article entitled, "Revelations About Revelation," by brother Roger Mattingly.

In my estimation, there are some fundamental hermeneutical fallacies in the approach asserted in this article. First, simply because apocalyptic/ judgment language bears similarity does not demand sameness. For instance, Isaiah's depiction of God's judgment on Babylon (Isaiah 13) uses similar language to Jesus' description of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 (Matthew 24:1-34), but this does not make the two distinct events the same. Likewise, although judgment language in Matthew 24 may have similarities to the apostle's John's description of the Lord's judgment on Rome in Revelation, such does not make them the same event. Similarity is not sameness! Every figure of speech has similarity to the thing to which it is compared. Otherwise, figures mean nothing. Yet as brother Elmer Moore used to say in jest, "'Go tell Herod, that fox...' must have meant that he had pointy ears and a bushy tail."

It was stated in the article that "a book of prophecy about the destruction of Rome has no value if its fulfillment can never be definitively verified." The concept that unless one knows definitively when a nation or city falls then prophecy has no meaning is not so. This is assumption and assertion, but it has not been proven or demonstrated. The Babylonian Empire fell, but there was a gradual process that led to its desolation. Additionally, kings and kingdoms are used interchangeably in Scripture (Daniel 7:17, 23), therefore is it not possible that the violent demise of Domitian encapsulates the fall of the empire, which would eventually occur? We do know Rome fell!

Mention of the temple and the city of Jerusalem are used by some to attempt to sustain an earlier date of the book, particularly in Revelation 11:1-2. Yet, this leads us to ask the question, "Why should these symbols be isolated and read as literal when the others in these contexts are not so viewed?" Interestingly, most of those who make such arguments fail to see that John's presentation does not match the Herodian structure, but Ezekiel's description of a spiritual temple. If one is understood, how is the other denied?

It is also argued that reference to "Babylon the Great" refers to Jerusalem. The passage, which is central to this view, is Revelation 11:8, which refers to the location "where their Lord was crucified." The ironic thing about this argument is that we don't have to even read another verse in the immediate context to see that there is serious equivocation occurring. The reference to the place of the Lord's crucifixion must be torn from its context to provide such a reading. The whole of this verse is given a symbolic reading and significance by the author himself: "And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified" (Revelation 11:8). Therefore "the city where the Lord was crucified" is no more to be identified with literal Jerusalem than it is with literal Sodom or Egypt. All these cities are being used to describe those who were judged by God for rebellion. Too, the "great city" is described as "ruling over the kings of the earth" (Revelation 17:18). That description does not fit Jerusalem's political influence to be sure, but it certainly does fit Rome's influence who was often identified as "the greatest of the cities." Jerusalem does not fit "the great city" which was marching in the mold of Babylon. Just as Babylon was a world power, so was Rome!

It should also be noted that in A.D. 71, the Roman mint issued a bronze coin that was a day's wage in the New Testament times. The front of the coin featured a profile of the Roman Emperor Vespasian, and the reverse featured a reclining figure of a woman sitting on seven hills, who was Dea Roma, the goddess of Rome. Residents of Asia Minor would have known what John's language was appealing to in their context.

The church at Smyrna did not exist at the time the early date for Revelation would require. In Revelation 2:8-11, the apostle John addresses a letter to the saints who comprised the congregation in the city of Smyrna. Polycarp, who lived in the mid-second century observed that the church at Smyrna did not exist during the life of Paul (Polycarp to the Philippians 11:3: "We had not known him" [i.e., the Lord]). The church could not have been established any earlier than A.D. 52-55, and perhaps even as late as 60-64. Paul is generally believed to have died in A.D. 67-68. John gives us the impression in Revelation that when he wrote to them the church had already been tried for a long period of time. So, a pre-A.D. 70 date for the

book simply would not be workable, unless the testimony of the bishop from Smyrna, Polycarp, is to be rejected as unoriginal, unhistorical, or somehow mistaken. This would be utterly unjustifiable!

The persecution described in Revelation is one that is said directly to affect the Christians of Asia Minor. Nero's persecution in A.D. 64 only impacted Christians in Rome. There is no evidence at all that the Christians of Asia Minor were persecuted during that period. At the same time, it should be noted that this localized event was eventually followed everywhere. By the time of Domitian, persecution had spread because a distinction had been made between Judaism and Christianity. Additionally, the imperial cult and its worship in Asia Minor were only enforced as a legal requirement late in the first century and not before. A very important theme in the book of Revelation is the worship of the image of the emperor (Revelation 13:4, 8, 12, 15; 14:9, 11; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4; 21:8; 22:15).

The literal city of Jerusalem in Palestine could not be the "holy city" of the Revelation. If the "holy city" is literal Jerusalem (Revelation 11:1-2) and not to be taken as a reference to the church, then there are serious contextual problems that develop. Although the temple will be persecuted – it is to persevere. This cannot be referring to physical Jerusalem but to the spiritual temple of God. History refutes the position that the text refers to physical Jerusalem. Literal Jerusalem was, in fact, razed to the ground by Rome. Is the "ark of the covenant" to be interpreted literally also? If the temple and city are interpreted in a figurative manner, then John is speaking of the survival of the church. Dating the book of Revelation prior to the fall of Jerusalem is not a viable option for several reasons. To argue that only those who take an early date can understand the theme of the book is not only an overstatement, but also untrue. In fact, it is the view of this writer that the later date has had such popularity among Bible students because of the persuasive merits of its evidence.

The Kingdom of God

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

To understand the Lord Jesus Christ, His mission, and His message, we must understand the kingdom. The four biographers of the Lord record 104 references He made to the heavenly kingdom. The message of John, the forerunner of Christ, was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matthew 3:1-2). The Master Himself preached "the gospel of the kingdom" (Matthew 4:23,17). Furthermore, He sent His apostles "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" to "preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand'" (Matthew 10:6-7). Righteous Israelites were anxiously awaiting the kingdom (Mark 15:43). But, because they misunderstood its nature, the Jewish leaders were shut out of the kingdom of God (Matthew 23:13). What, then, is the kingdom of God?

Definition

The word "kingdom" means primarily "sovereignty, royal power, dominion" but is used figuratively of "the territory or people over whom a king rules" (Vine. 2:294). Thus, the sons of Korah praised God: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom" (Psalm 45:6).

The psalmist uses three words interchangeably to denote the rule or dominion of God – "throne," "scepter," and "kingdom." All are associated with royal rule.

Everlasting and Universal

The rule or dominion of God is universal (Psalm 103:19). Thus, it may truly be said His kingdom is universal. "The Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses" (Daniel 4:17, 25, 32). Thus, the rise and fall of rulers and nations are under His control and guidance. Men may discuss and argue about why the Soviet Union collapsed or whether or not America and its allies should have overthrown Saddam Hussein, but ultimately these events were brought about by the hidden hand of the Almighty God. God is from "everlasting to everlasting" (Psalm 90:2), and "His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom" (Daniel 4:2). Thus, in the sense of the rule of the Almighty Creator over His creation, including

the affairs of men, through "laws which never shall be broken," His kingdom is eternal.

Past

But, in times past God had a kingdom that was especially His. At Mt. Sinai, the Lord God promised Israel:

"Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:5-6).

God was the true King of Israel (Psalm 89:19; 149:2; Zephaniah 3:15), and the throne of Israel was the throne of God (1 Kings 2:12; 1 Chronicles 29:23). This kingdom is now finished, for the Lord took the kingdom away from Israel when they killed His Son (Matthew 21:33-43).

Present

During the present age God rules through His Son, Christ Jesus. Daniel prophesied that during the time of the fourth empire from his day, the Roman Empire, "the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed" (Daniel 2:44). Isaiah earlier foretold:

"For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this" (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus, the Son of David and the Son of God (Luke 1:30-33). Jesus Christ alone is now the Spokesman for God, and He rules upon His throne (Hebrews 1:1-4,8). When God raised Jesus from the dead, He

"seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come" (Ephesians 1:15-23).

The kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, and the kingdom of Christ are one and the same in this age (Matthew 13:10-11; Luke 8:9-10; Ephesians 5:5).

The people who have submitted themselves to God through His Son Christ Jesus in faith and obedience constitute His spiritual kingdom in this present age (Hebrews 12:22-28). In this sense, the kingdom of Christ and the church (assembly) of Christ are the same (Matthew 16:18-19; 1 Peter 2:9-10). Christ rules in their hearts (Luke 17:20-21), and they are in His kingdom (Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:9).

Future, Everlasting

These same people and all the faithful of ages past will inherit the kingdom when the struggles against the kingdom of Satan are past (Matthew 25:34,46; 8:11; Acts 14:21-22; 2 Peter 1:10-11). This is the one, blessed hope of all the people of God, eternal life with the redeemed of all ages in heaven (1 Corinthians 15:50-54; 1 Peter 1:3-5).

Conclusion

God has not promised a future time of earthly bliss. When Christ returns He will deliver the kingdom back to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:22-24), and the earth and the material universe will be destroyed (2 Peter 3:10). We have but one hope (Ephesians 4:4), eternal life in the kingdom of God in heaven (1 Peter 1:3-5). Those who reign with the Lamb forever are "called, chosen, and faithful" (Revelation 17:14). Will you be among them?



If you no longer wish to receive these emails, please reply to this message with "Unsubscribe" in the subject line or simply click on the following link: [Unsubscribe](#)

[Click here](#) to forward this email to a friend

Meditate On These Things (MOTT)
2950 Hwy 5 S
Mountain Home, Arkansas 72653
US

[Read](#) the VerticalResponse marketing policy.

