



# July 2023

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

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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](http://christistheway.com).

## Tribute to Sean Cavender

MARCH 18, 1987 - JULY 20, 2023

*"Oil and perfume make the heart glad, so a man's counsel is sweet to his friend."  
(Proverbs 27:9)*

I confess to knowing very little about oils and perfume. Certainly, a fragrant aroma is better and more desirable than a putrid smell. Soap and deodorant are more pleasant than the lack thereof. Beyond that, I'm not the guy to speak to about fragrance. Of course, Solomon's purpose is not to exalt the excellence of beautiful odours - this is the lesser through which he introduces the greater - the value, the sweetness, and the delight of a close friend. In 2011, I was a speaker at the annual High School Road lectures in Indianapolis, Indiana. There, I met a young man who was also on the lectureship schedule, Sean Cavender. Over the next several years, he and I would become very close friends. We have always lived 1,200 miles or more apart but through social media, occasional visits, reciprocal gospel meetings, shared vacations, and being co-founders of an online publication ([GROW magazine](#)), our relationship and mutual respect continued to grow. Without a doubt, he was one of my very closest and best friends.

Sean was at the Truth Lectures 2023 in Athens, Alabama. On the morning of July 20, he spoke at the 8:00 a.m. slot on The Kingdom of God (his lesson is here: <https://youtu.be/823fcO-77sM>). That evening, after the lectures had concluded, his vehicle was struck and Sean was killed at the intersection in front of the Athens Bible School. He leaves behind his wife Kristin and two young sons, Xander and Zeke; his parents Randy and Brenda, his sister Savannah (Benjamin), his nieces Olivia and Evelyn, and his grandparents

Aubrey and Kay.

In 2 Samuel 1, we find "The Song of the Bow," a tribute written by David lamenting the death of King Saul and his son Jonathan who died in battle against the Philistines. David mourned the loss of these two great heroes of Israel. Saul and Jonathan were very different men. One was a valiant and powerful king, yet unfaithful to the Lord; the other, David's best friend (1 Samuel 18:1, 3; 19:2; 20:17), a kindred spirit, and most importantly a man of God. David eulogized these two important figures with the phrase, "How the mighty have fallen" (2 Samuel 1:19, 25, 27). He was not addressing their spiritual condition - one of them was faithful, and the other was not. It was not a statement of scorn or to disparage them in death; quite the opposite, for he called them "...the beauty of Israel ... beloved and pleasant in their lives ... swifter than eagles ... and stronger than lions" (2 Samuel 1:19, 23). It was an acknowledgement of the great place they occupied among the people of Israel and the hole their departure had left for the nation. But beyond that, David closed his song with a personal note, "I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; you have been very pleasant to me; your love to me was wonderful, surpassing the love of women. How the mighty have fallen..." (2 Samuel 1:26-27a).

Though my brother in the Lord was not as prominent among the people of God as Saul or Jonathan were, a mighty warrior in the Lord's church has fallen and a hole remains. Sean was a perpetual encouragement to many, a diligent Bible student and a humble, yet powerful proclaimer of truth. There was so much potential good to come from this young man to God's glory - but alas, how the mighty have fallen. I am distressed for you, my brother Sean. You have been very pleasant to me.

Those who knew and loved Sean are in sorrow, but not without hope.

*"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words."*  
(1 Thessalonians 4:14-18)

I am so glad to have known and loved Sean in the here and now. I anticipate a great reunion with him and all of the righteous in the there and then.

- William Stewart

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An archive of articles by Sean Cavender can be accessed at [GROW magazine](#)

An archive of audio sermons by sean Cavender is at [Westside church of Christ, Wichita, KS](#)

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## Seeing Exodus In Revelation

Sean Cavender | Deceased  
via GROW magazine, January 2020

Interest in the book of Revelation has heightened over the past several decades, perhaps popularized by the authors of the Left Behind series. They and many other writers present the symbols in Revelation as literal, futuristic, cataclysmic events, leading up to the second coming of Christ. There are a lot of conspiracy-type theories and approaches to the book of Revelation. Many people think they have unearthed "the" single key to help unlock all of the book's hidden and secret meanings. Media (TV, movies, news) sensationalize the book of Revelation. It is beyond the scope of this article to deal with all the erroneous approaches to the book – suffice it to say we need to teach the book of Revelation.

Sadly, many Christians are afraid of the book of Revelation. The over-zealous, sensational approaches to the book of Revelation create a sense of dysphoria and confusion in many people. Instead, Revelation

should give Christians a sense of hope and confidence; it should not lead people to confusion. There certainly are challenges to the book of Revelation, but it is not impossible to understand.

Problems abound in interpreting the book of Revelation because many people misunderstand apocalyptic literature. People assume apocalyptic literature means it contains predictive prophecy about the end of the world and the return of Jesus. This assumption misses out on the nature and purpose of apocalyptic writings. Again, this would be beyond the purview of our study, but apocalyptic literature was an ancient genre of writing that described historical and contemporary (at the time of the writing) events in an other-worldly way. Apocalyptic literature gives a “sneak peek” and “behind the scenes” look at how the events of this world are related to our spiritual purpose.

The goal of this article is to show how the book of Revelation fits within a biblical paradigm, or a mold – offering a point of comparison with something very familiar, and that is relatively easy to understand. When we study the Bible, we will often see connections between books of the Bible. For example, the book of Hebrews can be challenging if we are unfamiliar with the book of Leviticus and the old covenant sacrificial system.

The same is true for the book of Revelation. As the Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament states, “It is generally recognized that Revelation contains more OT references than does any other NT book, although past attempts to tally the total amount have varied...” (p. 1082). Some suggest the Old Testament is referenced a couple of hundred times in the book of Revelation; others count up to 1,000 references in the text. Seeing the Old Testament in the book of Revelation is helpful and points us in the right direction, but it does not give us a clear picture of the function and usage of the Old Testament references.

In spite of its difficulty, Revelation can be understood, and it does not have to be as challenging as we make it seem. I believe the Exodus story with Moses and the children of Israel down in Egypt is especially helpful in understanding what is going on in the book of Revelation. I am not suggesting that I know everything there is to know about the book of Revelation. Neither am I suggesting this is the only way (or even the best way) that Revelation must be read and understood. I do believe this is helpful for me, and I think it can be beneficial to you as well. I am trying to show how a familiar story may help us as a jumping-off point to a clearer understanding of the book of Revelation.

### **Exodus: Establishing A Paradigm**

The book of Exodus begins by telling how the descendants of Jacob were treated in Egypt. They had been enslaved by the Egyptians, who were building their empire at the time. Pharaoh had become afraid of the vast number of Hebrew people, so through slavery, he was able to dominate them. The Egyptian king was so fearful of the population growth of the Hebrews, he determined that every male child born among them was to be killed. The family of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were feeling the pressure of intense wickedness and persecution bearing down on them.

The Egyptians were wholeheartedly involved in idolatry. They served a pantheon of gods. Pharaoh was considered to be one of their gods. After the death of the Pharaoh who had commanded the male children to be killed, the children of Israel cried out to God in desperation. The Scripture reads, “Now it came about in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of their bondage rose up to God” (Exodus 2:23; NASB95). God heard their cries, and then He called Moses to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt.

Before they were able to leave Egypt, God demonstrated His great power and might against the Egyptian empire, their Pharaoh, and their gods. God promised His wrath and judgment would come against Egypt for the way they had treated His people (Exodus 7:3-6). The Lord fulfilled His promise by turning the Nile River to blood, covering the land with frogs, sending lice and flies across the land, bringing about the death of cattle, causing boils, hail, locusts, darkness, and finally the death of the firstborn. Through all these

plagues, God demonstrated His power against the Egyptians and Pharaoh. Yet throughout the plagues, the children of Israel were protected. When all of Egypt's livestock died, the Hebrews' animals were healthy. God protected His people from the plagues the Egyptians were suffering (Exodus 8:22-23; 9:4-6; 11:7).

Soon after the final plague (the death of the firstborn), Pharaoh conceded and allowed Moses to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. God's mighty hand was with them and protected them. God parted the Red Sea so Israel was able to cross on dry ground. After getting rid of Pharaoh's army, the children of Israel sang a song of praise to God (Exodus 15). Under God's guidance and Moses' leadership, the Hebrew people went to Mt. Sinai, where God gave them a law (Exodus 19:1) and renewed His covenant with them (Exodus 19:4-6). Israel would become a kingdom of priests to God. He gave them the Ten Commandments, which above all, demanded absolute loyalty and allegiance to God. If they would be faithful to God, then He promised His love and commitment to Israel for a thousand generations (Exodus 20:6).

The last 15 chapters of Exodus provide the details concerning the construction of the Tabernacle, which provided the children of Israel a place to worship God. At the end of the book of Exodus, God's glory filled the tent. Eventually, God told Moses to number the Israelites and take a census, and then they would begin their journey to the promised land (Numbers 1:2).

### **Reading Revelation As An Exodus Story**

Familiarity with the Exodus story above can help us understand the overall message of the book of Revelation. Comparing Exodus with Revelation can indeed be advantageous to us so that we will no longer be fearful of the message of Revelation.

Just as the children of Israel were persecuted at the hands of wicked Pharaoh (murdering of innocent babies and slavery), in the book of Revelation, the Lord's church is facing persecution. The persecution has led to the spilling of blood and martyrdom. It is stated from the outset of the book, "I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (Revelation 1:9, NASB95). One of the most potent visions in the entire book is when the souls who had been slain and were underneath the altar cry out for God's vengeance (Revelation 6:9-11). Remember when Israel cried out to God because of the harsh treatment that Egypt had forced them to endure? God remembered the covenant and then unleashed plagues on Egypt. Well, the book of Revelation shows us something similar.

The faithful and obedient saints faced persecution and martyrdom. God revealed His judgments and plagues against those who were causing such oppression to the church. The seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls all contain a series of plagues against those who are wicked, rebellious, and refuse to repent. Notably, in these judgments and plagues, there are correlations with the plagues God brought upon Egypt: hail (Revelation 8:7); water becoming blood (Revelation 8:8-9); darkness (Revelation 8:12); locusts (Revelation 9:7); and frogs (Revelation 16:13). God protected Israel from the plagues in Egypt; He also offers His protection for His people who have the seal of God (Revelation 7:1-8).

In the book of Revelation, Satan is ultimately the one who is wreaking havoc in the churches. When the dragon is unable to defeat Christ, he turns against the covenant people of God (pictured as the woman and her children who keep God's commandments, Revelation 12:17). God offered protection for the church, His covenant people who have been sealed, by delivering them on the wings of a great eagle (Revelation 12:14). The wilderness becomes a symbol of refuge and covenant renewal in the book of Revelation (Revelation 12:6). Revelation promises that God's people will ultimately be brought to a place of safety and refuge.

Following the children of Israel's exodus from Egypt, they were taken through the wilderness to Mt. Sinai where they received the Law of God and entered a covenant with God. The Lord reminded them of His great power: "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings,

and brought you to Myself” (Exodus 19:4, NASB95).

Revelation 14 is a beautiful picture of the saints who have overcome the ploys and plots of the evil one. They have been faithful to God, even to the point of death. They did not turn to serve idols or succumb to the pressures of persecution. They did not compromise their convictions – they served God and Him alone. Therefore, they are blessed to enjoy rest from their labors (Revelation 14:13). So they stand by the sea singing the song of Moses and song of the Lamb — a poignant scene that reminds us of the children of Israel singing and praising God after they saw pharaoh’s army defeated and drowned in the Red Sea. Then the tabernacle of heaven is opened, and the glory of the Lord is seen (Revelation 15:5-6), reminding us of the closing chapter of Exodus.

In Revelation 17 & 18, Babylon the Great falls. Babylon is symbolic of a world empire which, similar to Egypt, had conquered the children of Israel and deported them out of Jerusalem and Judea. God brought judgment upon ancient Babylon. Eventually, Jews have a second “exodus story.” Ezra led the Jews back home. The importance of “Babylon” in Revelation is that the world empire that is persecuting God’s people will be destroyed. God would judge the idolatrous worship and the wickedness that was so prominent because of the impenitence of heart (Revelation 9:20-21).

Ultimately, the book of Revelation shows us that God’s people will be victorious. Just as Israel looked defeated at the beginning of the book of Exodus, it ended with them worshipping God in the wilderness — out of Egypt. The book of Revelation offers a similar picture. There is hope, victory, and vindication for those who remain pure and firm in their conviction. Our allegiance is to be given to God and Him alone. If we are found faithful, then we will reign with Christ and dwell before God’s throne (Revelation 20-22).

The message in the book of Revelation is one that encourages faithfulness. It should not lead us to fear; instead, we should find confidence in the victory God has promised to those who are faithful to Him. God will give us the crown of life if we remain loyal and devoted to Him!

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## Living To Die

Mike Thomas | Bowling Green, Kentucky, USA

Issac Asimov tells the story of a rough ocean crossing during which a Mr. Jones became terribly seasick. At an especially rough time, a ship steward patted Jones on the shoulder and said, “I know, sir, that it seems awful. But remember, no man ever died of seasickness.” Mr. Jones lifted his green countenance to the steward’s concerned face and replied, “Man, don’t say that! It’s only the wonderful hope of dying that keeps me alive” (Bible Illustrator).

What a humorous yet appropriate way to respond to pain – “It’s only the wonderful hope of dying that keeps me alive.” Paul had a similar take on death when he wrote, “For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life” (2 Corinthians 5:4). Paul was anxiously awaiting his departure from this life. Not because he had a death wish to leave prematurely (“to be unclothed” of mortality), but he wanted to be “further clothed” in an eternal relationship with God (“that mortality may be swallowed up by life”). Eternal life meant more to him than life itself! This shows it is healthy for God’s people to think of the time when we will depart from this life. There is practical wisdom in numbering our days and in accepting our mortality. It gives us “a heart of wisdom” (Psalm 90:12) to know we do not have endless days here. In this sense, it is “Better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for that is the end of all men; and the living will take it to heart” (Ecclesiastes 7:2).

The child of God should not fear death because he serves a God who has defeated it. The Bible says of Jesus, “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release

those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:14-15). Nevertheless, we all struggle with wanting to stay here a little longer and to put off the time of our departure. We want to live with God eventually, for sure, but we also pray for as much time here as possible because it is inherent to our being. Job lived a life that was rich in blessings and happiness. He had his family by his side and was considered a great sage in his community (Job 29:5-10). Everything was going so well that he expected to die in such luxuries – “Then I said, 'I shall die in my nest’” (29:18). Oh what terrors awaited him! As his nest began to unravel, Job’s worst fears had come upon him and his only thoughts were on being delivered from his misery and pain. He cried out, “Why did I not die at birth? Why did I not perish when I came from the womb?” (3:11). Thankfully, he submitted to the Lord and placed his confidence in God’s guidance. He exclaimed, “I know You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You” (42:2).

So many things happen in life, even to the people of God, that we cannot explain. Our hearts break for one another as tragedy descends and presses on those we know and love because we know it is only a matter of time before loss and sorrow come to our door. Whenever it comes, let us find comfort in the promise of being with God after this life. The thought of seeing the One “who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body” (Philippians 3:21) should persuade us to welcome the end our life on earth. Not that we want to be unclothed of mortality (and leave our earthly relationships), but further clothed with an eternal body from God. “For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Corinthians 5:1).

With so much awaiting us beyond the grave, why would we not want to live to die?

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## True Love

“For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you” (2 Corinthians 2:4). “True love for any person makes one seek to deliver the loved one from wrong. Sometimes people uphold their husbands, wives children, and friends in a wrong course, and say they do it from love. This is not a true and helpful love. Love says get them right before God, and insists on the discipline needed to purify them. Not to do this is to encourage them in their own ruin. A selfish determination to uphold one’s own family or friends in a course of wrong is not love. It is really hatred, in a Bible sense of the word” (David Lipscomb, **A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles**. 3:37).

“He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly” (Proverbs 13:24)

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## The Preacher on the Fence

anonymous | submitted by Harold F. Sharp (deceased)

From out of the millions of the earth God often calls a man,  
To preach the Word and for the truth to take a loyal stand.  
'Tis sad to see him shun his cross, nor stand in its defense,  
Between the fields of right and wrong,  
A preacher on the fence.

Before him are the souls of men, destined for heav'n or hell,  
An open Bible in his hand, and yet he dare not tell  
All of the truth that's written there, he feareth an offense,  
The shame of heav'n, the joy of hell,  
A preacher on the fence.

Most surely God has called that man to battle for the right,

'Tis his to ferret out the wrong and turn on us the light.  
And yet he dare not tell the facts, he fears the consequences;  
The most disgusting thing on earth,  
A preacher on the fence.

If he should stand up for the wrong, the right he'd not defend  
If he should stand up for the right, the wrong he would offend;  
His mouth is closed, he cannot speak for freedom or against;  
Great God, deliver us from him,  
That preacher on the fence.

His better judgment, common sense, they pull him to the right,  
Behold him grip the top-most rail, and hang with all his might;  
His love of praise, it holds him fast, keeps him from going hence;  
He's in a most unpleasant plight,  
That preacher on the fence.

But soon both sides will find him out, and brand him as a fraud,  
A coward he, who dare not please the devil or his God;  
His sacerdotal robes, they're all a miserable pretense,  
And men of zeal will do their best,  
To club him off the fence

CHORUS:

Come down, come down,  
come down from the fence and preach the Gospel as it is,  
and take the consequence;  
Come down come down,  
Come down from off the fence,  
Your duty's plain, you can't remain,  
A preacher on the fence.

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## Do You Know All The Answers?

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

In an interview a few years ago in the Nashville, "Tennessean," a minister mocked the former position of the congregation by observing, "In the Church of Christ, we had all the answers." I presume that means he no longer thinks he has the answers. I surely won't go to him with a Bible question! Of course that is the popular, broad minded view that accepts all religions as equally valid.

The Bible recognizes no such idea. The Lord Jesus declared, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

The apostle Paul certainly believed he had the answers.

*"If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself" (1 Timothy 6:3-5).*

Peter was equally confident of the truth. "For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth" (2 Peter 1:12).

The apostle John informed his readers, "I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth" (1 John 2:21). He further declared:

*"Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds"*  
(2 John verses 9-11).

Do I believe I'm right on every biblical position I take? Of course I do! If I didn't, I would be dishonest to take the position.

Could I be wrong about some biblical issues? Of course I could! Inspiration is no longer in inspired men but the inspired Book (1 Corinthians 13:8-13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

But there is such a thing as absolute truth concerning the will of God. That truth came through Jesus Christ and is contained in the New Testament. Hold to the teaching of Christ, for it is true, and all other religious systems are lies.

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## **"I Have A Closed Mind"**

Fanning Yater Tant (deceased) | Vanguard Magazine, January 25, 1979

This editorial is being written on my birthday (December 30) I have now attained my three-score and ten, and have reached a point in life where I am neither ashamed nor afraid to say some things which would have been rank heresy at a younger age.

And one thing I have no hesitancy in affirming is that "I have a closed mind." I am not a "truth-seeker" in certain great and tremendously important areas. Will I discuss such questions with one who differs from me? Of course, I will--but as a teacher of my disputant, not as a "seeker after truth." I have the truth on these matters; I enjoy it.

I am no longer in any state of mind that allows for doubt or uncertainty. I think this is the trait that ought to characterize every mature Christian. As the years slip by, there should be more and more areas in which our convictions become so firmly rooted that we can join with Paul in saying, "we know," rather than "we believe" on such things, but have reached – certainty. Luke wrote to Theophilus in order that his friend might have "certainty" concerning the things in which he had been instructed. It is amazing the difference this "certainty" can make in the life of an individual.

### **The Existence of God**

Our generation has a plethora of people who do not believe in God. They are of two kinds—the theoretical, philosophical, quasi-scientific atheist who identifies with the fool of Psalm 14:1, and says, 'In his heart, there is no God,' and the professing believer whose practical and emotional life each day proclaims his disbelief in the words he mouths.

I do not have an "open mind" as to the existence of God. The truth of His being, and reality of His existence, has been so overwhelmingly established in my heart that I could doubt my own existence as easily as I could question the existence of God. The subject is not debatable. In my university and seminary days I spent many long hours carefully studying every argument I could find against His existence, arguments from the ancients as well as from current scholars. In essence there has been no new argument advanced in a thousand years, regardless of the field in which one explores. If someone advances what he considers new evidence to support a non-theistic concept, I believe with a little research I could show him where essentially that very argument was made and answered in the first two or three centuries of the Christian era.



### **The Divinity of Christ**

My mind is equally “closed” as to the Divinity of Jesus Christ. Will I study the subject with an unbelieving Jew? Of course, I will – but as a teacher, not as a truth-seeker. And incidentally, I have yet to meet a truly sincere unbeliever who has carefully read and studied one good book on Christian Evidences! The nature of Christ was a subject of hot debate in the very earliest days of Christianity. Even among those who professed to be followers of Christ, there were some (the Cerinthians or Ebionites) who denied the divinity of Christ, contending that he was wholly human, but was “infused” with the Divine essence in the form of a dove which came upon Him at His baptism, and departed from Him on the cross. (They declare that the agonizing cry from the cross, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” was wrung from Jesus when he realized that Divinity had left Him, and He was to die as a mere human being.)

More than a century ago H. P. Liddon, Canon of St. Paul’s and Professor of Exegesis in the University of Oxford, delivered a series of lectures on “The Divinity of Christ (Bampton Lectures, 1866) which has been generally acknowledged as an absolutely impregnable defense of the central truth of Christ’s divinity. He demonstrated beyond all question the falsity of those opposers of the first centuries and the monotonous way in which these old discarded and shop-worn arguments keep cropping up from time to time in new dress and current form. But they are as false now as when they came from the pens of such pagan philosophers as Celsus, Prophyry, and Hierocles in the early dawn of the faith. I read the writings of such men with the same detached interest which I have in reading Greek mythology --- interesting but obviously absurd.

### **Immortality**

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “For we know if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens.” (2 Corinthians 5:1). Paul had a “closed mind” as to immortality; it was not a speculative or debatable subject with him. Nor with me. I think I am familiar with the objections to such an idea; whether from the realm of pure science or from philosophical assumptions. But the evidence for such is so strong as to amount to a demonstration, indeed, that is exactly what happened in the resurrection of Christ. And on purely philosophical grounds it is far less difficult to accept the idea of a life beyond the grave than to accept the origin of life ex nihilo (out of nothing) in the first place! Will I discuss the idea of immortality with an unbeliever? Of course. But I am not a “truth-seeker,” on this subject; I would view myself as a “truth-believer.” I am happy and relaxed in the certainty of immortality, rather than groping and wondering and hanging in suspense. I share completely the conviction of Washington Gladden,

“That somewhere, beyond the stars,  
Is a Love that is better than fate;  
When the night unlocks her bars  
I shall see Him, and I will wait”

### **Apostasy**

There is one other area, a sad one this, in which my mind is very nearly “closed” – not completely so, perhaps, but near enough to it to bring unceasing sorrow of heart. That is the conviction that the great majority of what some have called the “mainline Churches of Christ” will continue right on their present course into full-fledged denominationalism. I do not think any mature student of church history can view the present scene with any understanding at all and come to any other conclusion. I am quite aware of the valiant efforts of such men as Thomas B. Warren, Guy N. Woods, Ira Y Rice and some others to stem the tide. I think they are doomed to failure. The whole lesson of religious history over thousands of years demonstrates that once an apostasy gets well under way, it never turns back.

Nearly a century ago David Lipscomb wrote on this subject in the Gospel Advocate pointing out the melancholy fact that a “pattern of apostasy” is seen over and over again through all of God’s dealing with His people. There would be alternating periods of faithfulness and apostasy, and every time an apostasy developed, it would sweep the great majority of God’s people into its destructive error. Usually only a

remnant (and sometimes not even that) would emerge holding “to the old paths.” This remnant would gradually grow and become strong again, and when a few generations had passed, and the children of God were once again a great and powerful people --- the same dismal story would be repeated. Lipscomb’s plea was that every reader of the Gospel Advocate determine in his heart to “be a part of the remnant,” I would add to Lipscomb’s plea that every reader of “Vanguard” not only determine to be “a part of the remnant,” but that you exert every effort within your power (your prayers, your purse, and your personal influence with others) to persuade every Christian you can reach to become like you, “a part of the remnant.”

And so my seventieth birthday draws to a close; the day is far spent, the night is at hand. On this cold but beautiful winter’s day, I look back across these seventy years only briefly; my real interest is in the years that lie ahead: I face the future, not the past. I ran across a few lines from Robert Frost the other day that fit my mood perfectly,

“The woods are lovely, and dark and deep;

But I have many miles to go, And promises to keep, Before I sleep.”

And I travel those miles, and keep those promises with a “closed mind” --- on some subjects!

And now I leave the typewriter to go to a “surprise birthday party” some of the folks from the church have prepared for me!

(NOTE) The warnings, written by my father over 40 years ago, have certainly come to pass, as we see so many “churches of Christ” today that are using instrumental music in worship, ordaining women as elders, and having women preaching. The old saying that “History repeats itself” has certainly proven to be true. The pattern is seen over and over again in the Old Testament, and continues to this day. We must give heed to the words of Jeremiah 6:16: “Thus says the LORD, “Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, Where the good way is, and walk in it; And you will find rest for your souls. But they said, ‘We will not walk in it.’” –

-- Jefferson David Tant

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## But What If There Are Children?

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When we teach what should be an obvious truth that repentance (Acts 2:38, 2 Peter 3:9) demands adulterous marriages (per Matthew 19:9) be terminated, many will respond “but what if there are children”? Consider an Old Testament illustration: The Israelites were forbidden from marrying women from certain foreign nations (Deuteronomy 7:1-4). Evidently a number of Israelites had violated this prohibition and were told to “separate yourselves ... from the strange wives” in Ezra 10:11. Did it make any difference that some of these unions had already produced children? Not according to verse 44, it didn’t.

What can we learn from this Old Testament incident? The reason the marriages were unscriptural was different than the reason Matthew 19:9 describes, but it still illustrates for us we have to do what’s right even if it brings about unfortunate consequences. In this case we learn that just because children may be born to a marriage God does not approve of (per Mark 10:11), that doesn’t justify continuing to commit adultery by remaining in such marriage. In the same vein, if Herod and Herodias’ marriage had already produced children, would that have changed John the Baptist’s instruction to Herod in Matt 14:4 “It is not lawful for thee to have her”? I think not.

Three parallels: Suppose a couple are married with no children, and the wife steps out of that marriage and has children by a second man who is not her husband. Would that justify the wife divorcing her innocent rightful husband (Luke 16:18), so she can marry the man she has been committing adultery with - to make things better for those children (Rom 7:2-3)? Suppose a married man with children takes on a second wife (polygamy), and has children by that second wife (1 Corinthians 7:2). Would those children justify remaining married to both women at the same time? Suppose two women married to each other adopt

children (Romans 1:26). Would those children justify keeping that lesbian marriage together? Deep down we know the answer to the question raised by this article, don't we?

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## **"What Is Man That You Are Mindful Of Him"**

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"When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him?" (Psalm 8:3-4)

When we read these verses from Psalm 8, one cannot help but think of David the shepherd boy looking toward the heavens on a starlit night and beholding all God had created, the stars and moon, etc. As he looks at this great expanse and is in awe of what he sees, he realizes he is just one being in a vast universe. This seems to lead to the question he poses. I suppose we all have had similar feelings at some time in our lives. Is God really mindful of me? Does He really care what is going on in my life? I'm just one human being among millions and millions. I'm just one tiny dot among all the things which our Heavenly Father has created and sustains day by day. Yet the answer to the question asked is yes! He does care.

He cares enough about each of us to provide the necessities of life. In Matthew 6, in Jesus' Mountain sermon, He tells His audience not to worry about what they will eat, drink, or wear (Matthew 6:25-32). They are reminded of how the Lord provides food for the birds of the air and clothes the lilies of the fields, and likewise He will supply the things they need as well. In verse 33 of this text, there is a condition attached, if one seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Worry is one of the great problems all must overcome. We must learn to trust and obey our Lord.

He is so mindful of each of us, He is willing to supply our spiritual needs as well. God desires all men to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). Jesus didn't die just for a select few, but for every man, woman, and child (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). Every spiritual blessing we need is available in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). Not everyone will receive those favors because he is unwilling to obey our Lord (Hebrews 5:8-9). No one will be able to stand before the Lord in judgment and offer the excuse that salvation was not available to him. It matters not if one is rich or poor, educated or uneducated, white or black, American or Mexican, man or woman, etc. The fountain of living waters is available to all (Jeremiah 17:13), yet everyone is responsible for drinking this water (John 4:14).

God also knows man will be tempted to sin. Since the beginning of creation, Satan and his forces have been at work trying to destroy man's relationship with the Father (Genesis 3). He can do that by getting him to sin (Isaiah 59:1-2). The Lord is mindful of the devil's efforts and of man's need to resist these temptations. In 1 Corinthians 10:13, we are told that Jehovah will not allow us to be tempted above what we are able to bear and also, He will provide a way to escape when those temptations come. We must do all we can to resist the efforts of Satan so he will flee (James 4:7) and seek the God-given way of escape so we are not overcome with sin. The Lord is faithful to provide the necessary help. Let us be faithful by following His instructions.

As pilgrims and sojourners upon this earth, every person will face difficult times. Just because one is a Christian does not mean he/she is immune to the problems associated with life. The child of God faces the same kind of troubles that unbelievers do. Yet the Lord's people have help from on high because He cares. The apostle Peter tells us to cast all our cares upon the Lord, for He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7). In this same epistle, we are told the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are open to their prayers (1 Peter 3:12). The writer of the book of Hebrews instructs us to come boldly to throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. The reason, we have a High Priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses (Hebrews 4:15-16), because He was tempted in all points as we are yet without sin.

Is God actually mindful of me? Does He really care about me? I seem so small and insignificant when

compared to all the things the Lord has created. Yes, He does care and yes, He is mindful of everyone. Knowing this, no longer should we live for ourselves but for Him who loved us and gave His Son to save us (Galatians 2:20).

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## Justification (Part 2)

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### The Results of Justification

*“whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:25-26).*

As the result of propitiation by the blood of Christ God is shown to be righteous (Romans 3:26). The holy Lord God “in His forbearance” (“holding back ... delay of punishment” (Vine. New Testament. 247), had “passed over” the guilt of those who had sinned before Christ died on the cross. God in all justice could have cast all sinners into hell, but He exercised forbearance, knowing He would send His Son to die for them.

Some contend the Holy Lord God could forgive us on any basis He wanted. The Hebrew writer contends otherwise. “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins” (Hebrews 10:4). No number of animals can equal in value one human, for animals do not possess immortal spirits made in the image of God, whereas all people do (Genesis 1:26-27). That veritable mighty river of blood flowing from the millions of animal sacrifices under the Levitical system (cf. Leviticus chapters 4 - 5; Numbers chapters 28 - 29) could never take away even one sin; it took the death of the Son of God (Hebrews 9:13-14).

What a monster one makes of God when he contends God could have accepted any sacrifice. You mean a bull would have done, but He demanded the death of His only begotten Son? Why not just leave in place the Levitical system of sacrifices?

In contrast to animal sacrifices, the death of Christ has the value to ransom the whole world from sin (John 1:29). There are two reasons. He was sinless, so He could die for others rather than for Himself (1 Peter 1:18-19). And He is the Son of God, infinite in value, so He could die as the “propitiation” (reconciliation) “for the whole world” (1 John 2:2). One sinless man, of which there are none, could die for one sinful man, but only the Son of God could die for the whole world.

But to die, He had to become a man, since God is immortal, that is, not subject to death (1 Timothy 1:17; 6:16). Thus, to die for us, He became a man like us, but without sin (Hebrews 2:9-18; 4:15-16), and without ceasing to be God (John 1:1-3, 14; 5:17-18; Romans 9:5; Colossians 1:15-17; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:1-4).

But the death we deserve because of our sins is eternal death, separation from God (Romans 6:23; cf. Isaiah 59:1-2) in an eternal devil’s hell (Revelation 20:10, 14-15). The infinitely holy God cannot look upon sin (Habakkuk 1:13); He cannot fellowship sin nor sinners in their sin (1 John 1:5-6).

Thus, Jesus, to exonerate the justice of God, was separated from the Father on our behalf and in our place. When He cried upon the cross, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, ‘My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?’” (Matthew 27:46; cf. Mark 15:34), He wasn’t just quoting Scripture (Psalm 22:1). He was expressing the agony of His soul in the words David prophesied when He wrote of the crucifixion (Psalm 22:7-8, 11-18).

Psalm twenty-two is parallel to Isaiah fifty-three. According to Isaiah, the Servant of the Lord would be despised and rejected by men (Isaiah 53:1-3), the Lord would lay on Him the iniquity of us all (53:4-6), i.e.,

He would take the punishment for our guilt, thus, He would silently submit to unjust suffering (53:7-9), after which He would be victorious, i.e., He would be raised and ascend into glory (53:10-13). According to David, He would suffer the death of the cross in our place (Psalm 22:1-21), then He would be delivered (raised from the dead, Psalm 22:21-31).

This is not Calvinism. According to Calvinists, God imputed our guilt to Christ Jesus. According to Isaiah, God imputed the punishment for our guilt to His Son.

And yes, because He is the Son of God, infinite in value, His three hour separation from the Father equals in value our eternal death (Romans 6:23).

And no, this does not break up the perfect unity of God. The Father and the Son are one (John 10:34) in work (John 4:34), creation (Ephesians 3:9), authority (John 5:43), love (John 14:23), protection (John 10:27-30), witness (John 8:18), doctrine (John 7:16), will (John 6:38), and judgment (John 5:22) (Greeson). Jesus endured the agony of the cross, including separation from the Father (Matthew 27:46; cf. Mark 15:34), because He submitted His will to the Father's (Matthew 26:39; Luke 22:42). Had He not done so, He would have broken the unity of God.

### **Conclusion**

In the cross of Jesus divine love and divine justice are reconciled.

When our Savior endured the agony and shame of the cross, He indeed took our place. For three hours there was darkness over the land, as the Father forsook His only begotten Son and refused to look. The Father forsakes those who forsake Him (Deuteronomy 31:16-17; 2 Chronicles 15:2). The sinless Son of God died as the lost sinner dies that we might not have to die that way. In so doing He demonstrated the justice of God and made it possible for us, lost sinners that we were, to be justified and experience the fellowship that the Father and Son enjoy.

You and I will be justified before God if we in simple, trusting faith obey Him by going through a likeness of His death, burial, and resurrection by being baptized into Him.

One day you and I will stand before the Son to be judged by Him, "For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son" (John 5:22). That judgment will be just (John 5:30). Will you be justified or condemned?

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