

# FOUNDATION

*PREACHING THE GOSPEL • TEACHING THE WORD • CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH*

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*Volume 39 • Issue 1*

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*“To whom then will ye liken Me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things....”*

*Isaiah 40:25-26*



*“For other **FOUNDATION** can no man lay than that is laid, which is **JESUS CHRIST**.” — 1 Corinthians 3:11*

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*Preaching the Gospel • Teaching the Word • Contending for the Faith*

Volume 39 • Issue 1

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## CONTENTS

Editorials .....	3
False Doctrine and the Child of God.....	6
Robert Lightner	
Sanctification by Law or by Grace? .....	14
Bob Picard	
Prophecy Essay #4: What Events Accompany the Second Advent? .....	15
Manfred Kober	
"Lord, Thou Knowest All Things" .....	20
A. C. Gaebelein	
The Logic of the Argument for Creation and Against Evolution .....	24
Robert Kofahl	
Is the Pretribulational Rapture Recent? .....	27
Gary Freel	
FEA News & Views.....	30

# Editorial Thoughts...

Evangelical leaders today are so uncertain and tentative in their words and actions that it is difficult to know just where they stand on some of the most important issues of our day. Many of these leaders vary their messages to appeal to different audiences, often expressing positions and principles that are contradictory. When they write books or prepare tapes and videos, some of their message is so biblical and so well-presented that even true believers could respond with a hearty “Amen!” However, so many half-truths, perversions of truth, and outright errors are mixed with the precious truths of God’s Word that any believer with even a limited amount of spiritual discernment is left with serious questions and doubts—“What is this leader trying to say?” “What does he mean?” “Is he teaching new truths I need to learn, or is error being presented in a deceptive form?”

Is it the believer’s scriptural responsibility to be reconciled to the enemies of Christ and the Bible, or must these enemies be properly identified, exposed, and removed from fellowship? Today, evangelical leaders and movements have become so popular and appear to enjoy such

growth and success that it is difficult to speak words of reproof and rebuke, even though all of God’s leaders are commanded to do so (2 Tim. 4:1-5). We plead with all believers everywhere to realize that failure to declare and obey “all the counsel of God” can only lead to ultimate spiritual disaster for all concerned.

In 1 Corinthians 14:8, God asks a question that implies only one answer: “For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” The only answer possible is “no one.” If those commissioned to be God’s trumpet blowers (which would certainly include every evangelical leader) give uncertain sounds on their trumpets, those who look to them for leadership and spiritual guidance will certainly be deceived and confused, making them easy prey for Satan and his angels of light (2 Cor. 11:1-15).

A similar message to that which God gave to His people Israel in Isaiah 58:1 needs to be repeated with even greater diligence to all believers today: “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.” Tragically, most evangelical leaders today are trumpeting uncertain sounds, giving mixed signals, and leaving their followers in a state of spiritual confusion. Yet every Christian leader has the God-given responsibility not only to help bring the unsaved to Christ but also to feed believers with

## The Uncertain Sounds of Evangelicalism

by

*Pastor M. H. Reynolds Jr.*  
(1919-1997)

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the pure Word of God. At the same time, he is to protect them from the wolves in sheep's clothing (false teachers) who have surreptitiously infiltrated the flock and from those who have risen from within the flock (disobedient brethren) to draw away disciples after themselves (Acts 20:17-32).

Several reasons explain why most evangelical leaders produce uncertain sounds on their trumpets, but perhaps the primary reason is that most people today want to hear words that please the flesh and not those that call for personal sacrifice. When absolute truth is proclaimed without regard for how that truth may be received, Christian leaders, whether pastors, missionaries, evangelists, teachers, writers, or speakers, quickly discover that numbers decrease and contributions disappear. Many professing Christians today are looking for and willing to accept almost any form of worldliness as long as the word "Christian" is coupled with it. As a result, we have "Christian" entertainment, "Christian" psychology, and "Christian" rock music. The satanic premise, "The end justifies the means," has been "Christianized." This phrase is now being applied to unscriptural evangelism in both the message and methods. It is used to produce massive movements that result in unscriptural worship, Bible study, prayer, and fasting; it is used to destroy scriptural walls that provide necessary spiritual protection for the children of God; it is used to build bridges between truth and error, unscriptural bridges that facilitate the promotion and acceptance of doctrines of demons (1 Tim. 4:1-3) and fail to protect against the insidious wiles of Satan (Eph. 6:10-18).

Despite the uncertain sounds of evangelicals that are so prevalent today, we are so thankful that God has His faithful leaders scattered around the globe—men comparable to Elijah in the Old Testament who stood alone in challenging the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of the groves (1 Kings 18:17-46); men like the apostle Paul in the New Testament who, in a time of crisis, found himself standing alone, humanly speaking, but received deliverance from the Lord who stood with him (2 Tim. 4:16-18). Through our slowly expanding radio and literature ministries, God is bringing us into contact with other leaders of like precious faith, convictions, and desires. We are thankful that we can encourage each other in the continuing battle for the faith and in the proclamation of the one true gospel of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone. We are thankful for the growing number of letters and phone calls from fellow believers whose spiritual discernment has led them to separate from compromising churches even though such separations are extremely painful. We are thankful for the growing number of discerning believers who are withdrawing financial support from compromising groups and individuals and using their means to help those who will not bow the knee to Baal nor remain silent in these days of rapidly increasing apostasy and compromise. We may not have much time left to serve the Lord "acceptably with

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reverence and godly fear” (Heb. 12:28), for our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ could return at any moment (1 Thess. 4:13-18). But as long as He leaves us here, we should put Him first in our hearts, minds, thoughts, and actions.

A wonderful future lies ahead for those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. The conflict now is great. The problems may seem insurmountable, and suffering may be intense. But let no believer become weary in well doing, for God has promised that we shall reap in due time (His time) if we faint not (Gal. 6:7-9). Let us continually look up! Our redemption draws nigh! ☐

## *Editorial Thoughts...*

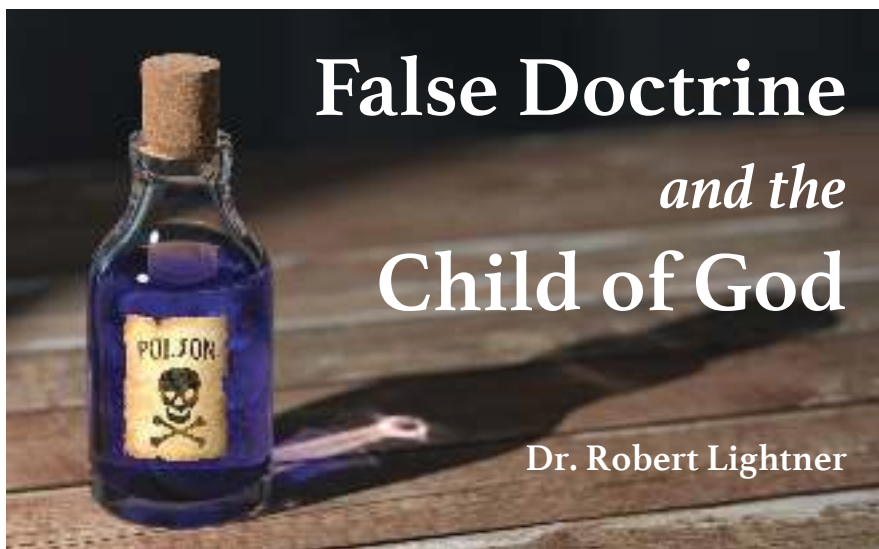
As we enter a new year, we could not be more excited about the possibilities God has provided at the Fundamental Evangelistic Association. This year we reach a milestone—we will celebrate the ninetieth year of this ministry. For ninety years, the Lord has allowed us to minister to people around the world by “preaching the gospel, teaching the Word, and contending for the faith.” Very few ministries today can claim this legacy, and yet we acknowledge that it is the Lord who has graciously provided the means to press forward and carry on. If the need for the Fundamental Evangelistic Association existed ninety years ago, it exists so much more in 2018!

*Foundation* magazine, *Feature: A Daily Bible Study Guide*, *The Bright Spot*, our “What Does the Bible Say?” and “FEA Today” broadcasts, as well as our other evangelism, discipleship, and informational resources are continuing to be a blessing and encouragement to thousands of people around the globe. This ministry is only possible through your prayers, fellowship, and financial support; therefore, we want to sincerely thank you for standing with us in this hour. God has used you to encourage our hearts and enable us to press forward for His glory. We are continually amazed by God’s sustaining grace!

Jesus Christ may return for His church at any moment—this is our “blessed hope” (Titus 2:13). Because of this fact, we want to continue to use the time He has given us for His glory. As we look around at the world and church today, we firmly believe the time is short, and we desire to be of help and encouragement to as many people as possible in the coming year should our Lord tarry. May God continue to bless you as you keep looking up and seeking to honor Him with the time that remains. ☐

## **God’s Sustaining Grace**

by  
*Matt Costella*



# False Doctrine and the Child of God

Dr. Robert Lightner

**L**ONG BEFORE THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE WAS COMPLETED, HETERODOXY, OR FALSE DOCTRINE, WAS EVIDENT. The fact is, as soon as God's truth was given, it was distorted and opposed by some. Wherever on earth there has been truth, there has also been error. It is the mixture of the two that causes the greatest problem. The pages of Scripture and the record of secular history both verify these truths.

The longer error is condoned, the easier it becomes to compromise the truth. Somehow a conditioning process goes on. An unhealthy toleration of false doctrine usually leads to accommodation to it to one degree or another. When that which is false is left unchecked, unexposed, or unopposed, it gradually appears to be less and less objectionable to more and more people. It loses its true character and looks more and more like merely a weak and watered down form, a less desirable option than the truth to be sure, but not the falsehood it really is and was once thought to be.

At the turn of the century, J. Gresham Machen, a great stalwart of orthodoxy, apparently sensed this was what was happening to many in his day in their understanding of what liberal theology really was. He spoke to the issue most eloquently and pointedly in his classic *Christianity and Liberalism*. The major thesis of this champion of the faith was that theological liberalism was not in any sense a form or variety of orthodox theology. He insisted it must not be viewed as partly Christian and partly non-Christian. Rather, it was to be seen as non-Christian, heterodox, and anti-Christ, he insisted.<sup>1</sup> Machen put it bluntly when he wrote about the modern liberalism of his day. He said it was to be criticized "on the ground that it is unchristian and on the ground that it is unscientific.... Despite the use of traditional phraseology modern liberalism not only is a different religion from Christianity but belongs in a totally different class of religions."<sup>2</sup>



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The reason for this bold assertion was that classic liberal theology rejected and ridiculed belief in the supernatural Christ of Scripture and the supernatural Scripture of Christ.

Other great defenders of the faith shared Machen's views. Arno C. Gaebelein, for instance, argued strongly that "modernistic" Christianity was "the most dangerous infidelity true Christians had ever faced before."<sup>3</sup>

On the heels of the collapse of the old liberal theology of Machen's day with its deification of man and humanization of God came Neo-Orthodoxy. This was built upon the same foundation of the Higher Critical theory of the Bible. Combined with this and in response to it, there has arisen in our day a new contemporary liberal theology. This new liberalism also rests solidly upon the very same foundation of older classic liberalism. The new breed, however, speaks with more respect of Christ and the Bible. Nevertheless, what we have today is the very same denials of old pre-war classic liberal theology in a new costume. The wrapping has changed, but the content of the package is for all intent and purpose the same.

David Wells has accurately summarized the present state of affairs in these words: "The old doctrine affirmations, the confessions of faith from the period of classical orthodoxy as well as the creeds from the patristic period that sought to summarize biblical truth, are now typically considered naïve and completely out of date. They no longer serve as the means for defining what should be confessed, even if they are retained for liturgical purposes. The whole idea of confession, in consequence, has shifted from truth with an external and objective referent to intuition which is internal and subjective."<sup>4</sup>

How then is the Bible-believing child of God to respond to false doctrine today? What should the response of those who embrace and seek to obey the Bible be toward departure from the historic orthodox Christian faith?

The Word of God does give instruction about how the child of God is to respond to false doctrine. Five scriptural realities must be faced by those who accept the Bible as their infallible rule of faith and practice. Just what does the Bible have to say about false teaching, and how should those who embrace truth respond to it?

## **Prediction of False Teachers and False Doctrine**

Jesus warned His disciples of those who "come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matt. 7:15). Repeatedly, He alerted His own of the false teaching of the religionists of His day. He was quick to tell His own that false teachers would come and would increase in the future. "For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (Matt. 24:5).

With a pastor's heart, Paul put the Ephesian Christians on alert concerning the savage wolves who would come in among them and seek to destroy the flock. They would "enter in among you, not sparing the flock," he said (Acts 20:28-32).

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The apostle did the same for the believers at Corinth so they would not be led astray “from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Cor. 11:3-4). He knew some were preaching “another Jesus.” The saints in Galatia needed the same warning since some of them were already following after “another (a different) gospel” (Gal. 1:6). He is “accursed” (Gal. 1:9), Paul said of all who teach a false gospel.

Timothy, the young preacher, was told that “in the latter times some shall depart from the faith” (1 Tim. 4:1), that is, they would fall away from the truth. Those who do would give heed to the “doctrines of devils.” Like Hymenaeus and Alexander, who had already made “shipwreck” of the faith, others would arise and do the same (1 Tim. 1:19-20).

“Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines,” the saints addressed in the book of Hebrews were exhorted (Heb. 13:9). Peter (2 Pet. 2:1) and John (1 Jn. 4:1) both reminded the people of God whom they served about “false prophets.”

## Command to Separate

That false teachers and teachings were present already in the early church and would continue and even increase in the last days is a clear teaching of Scripture. Specific commands are also given in Scripture instructing the child of God to separate from these false teachers and this false doctrine.

The child of God is told to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,” but instead he should “reprove” or expose them (Eph. 5:11). The word “fellowship” carries the idea of being “a just partner with.” The command seems clear enough. Eadie’s comment on the meaning is to the point: “A line of demarcation was to separate the church from the world; and not only was there to be no participation and no connivance, but there was in addition to be rebuke.”<sup>5</sup>

Those who had only a form of godliness but denied its power Timothy was told to avoid (2 Tim. 3:5). The phrase “turn away” is in the present tense and the imperative mood and therefore represents a command to *continue* to turn away from false doctrine. All who name the name of Christ are to abstain from wickedness (2 Tim. 2:19). Those who teach and promote false doctrine are likened to vessels of dishonor by Paul. The obedient believer who cleanses himself from such is described as a “vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master’s use” (2 Tim. 2:21). “Purge” from *Ekkaqairw* means to cleanse, to clean thoroughly. “Timothy is to separate himself from communion with ‘these,’ the vessels of dishonor spoken of in verse 20. . . . The reference here is to the separated life a Christian should live. Here it has direct application to the obligation of a pastor to refuse to fellowship in the work of the ministry with another pastor who is a Modernist.”<sup>6</sup>

Christians at Corinth were charged with the solemn responsibility to be apart from idolatry and idol worshippers (2 Cor. 6:14-16). The principle of separation from error of any kind cannot be removed from this passage. The command



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was unmistakable: “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you” (v. 17). From verse 14 through verse 16 Paul made several references to Old Testament passages where the truth of separation from false teaching is taught. With verse 17 he draws practical implications from the truth that believers are the temple of the living God. “The older shrines were separated off from the world around them: so the Christians must be spiritually and morally withdrawn from the pagan society in which they have to live. Paul’s appeal to the Corinthians to make this withdrawal is given in words originally spoken by God to His people through Isaiah when He called them out of exile. They were to leave in Babylon everything that was unclean, taking only the sacred vessels of the temple, so that they might continue to be a people whom God could *receive*, i.e., whom He could look upon with favour (see Isa. 52:11).”<sup>7</sup>

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God, through the apostle Paul, pronounced a curse upon those who proclaimed a false gospel (Gal. 1:8-9). It would seem to follow then that the child of God should not be in fellowship with that which stands under the judgment of God. Surely those who reject such foundational doctrines as the absolute deity of Christ and the divine authority of the Bible do not stand in God’s favor but rather are under His disfavor and judgment.

The apostle of love also had some strong words of exhortation for the believer in regard to his relation to false doctrine. John’s chief concern was with the Person and work of Christ. He said, “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God” (2 Jn. 9). In this way he made clear the total falsity

of the view he described. But what is to be the believer’s response to such false teachers and teaching? Of such a one John said, “Receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed” (v. 10). An official coming may have been in view and not just a casual visit from a stranger. To disobey the injunction was to share in the false teacher’s evil deeds (v. 11).

There is an interesting contrast to the above in 3 John. There the apostle wrote of the need for believers to receive the faithful believers who were itinerate evangelists so that “we might be fellowhelpers to the truth” (3 Jn. 8). This is the exact opposite response that the believer is to have toward false teachers. In 3 John the fellow believer is to welcome and give hospitable support in contrast to the avoidance taught in 2 John.

The biblical teaching seems clear enough. The issue of separation from apostasy is settled for those who claim allegiance to the Word of God. The

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believer's responsibility is now to obey. And that is not always easy to do; yet God expects His children to obey.

An example of disregard of this teaching is to be found in an effort to have Protestant evangelicals and Roman Catholics join hands in the task of world evangelization. Two major contentions of the group led by the late Charles Colson of Prison Fellowship Ministries and Father Richard John Neuhaus provide the reason for the new effort. One is that for too long, division between these two groups have obscured Christ and the one mission which both share. Also, there has been "proselytizing" and "sheep stealing" which, it is argued, must cease.

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***To think that Protestant evangelicals and the Roman Catholic Church both give the same allegiance to Christ and both share the same mission is simply not true.***

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To think that Protestant evangelicals and the Roman Catholic Church both give the same allegiance to Christ and both share the same mission is simply not true. The goal of this new agreement between Protestant evangelicals and Roman Catholics is to "affirm together," "hope together," "search together," "consent together," and "witness together."<sup>8</sup>

Throughout the document discussed above there is a startling omission of any serious discussion of two very important doctrines which have always divided Evangelicals and Roman Catholics. The sincerity of the framers of "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium" is real and obvious throughout its paper. This must be lauded. However, for whatever reason, those who formulated the statement, and apparently those who signed it, overlooked the two most basic differences between Rome and the Reformers which differences have always divided the two,

still divide them, and probably will continue to divide them unless evangelical theology capitulates to Rome. There are some signs that the latter has already begun.

What are these two cardinal doctrines? They are *sola Scriptura* and *sola fide*. These are what compelled Luther to pen and post his 95 Theses on the door in Wittenberg.

Rome, at the time of the Reformation, did not reject the authority of Scripture, but she did not believe that only, *sola*, the Bible was authoritative. Tradition was elevated to the same level as Scripture. Neither did Rome reject salvation by faith at the time of the Reformers. What she did reject was that salvation was by faith alone, *sola*. Human works were elevated to the same level as faith.

Both of these errors are still embraced by the Roman Catholic church today. There has not been any change in Rome's view of these two cardinal doctrines.

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Therefore, for evangelicals to cooperate with Rome in propagating the “gospel” is to compromise the faith at the most basic level.

A more difficult biblical truth for many to accept and obey is separation from Christian brothers who persist in walking in disobedience. God’s Word addresses the question of the believer’s fellowship with other believers who embrace false doctrine. Two passages bear especially on this point: 1 Corinthians 5:13 and 2 Thessalonians 3:6.

The Corinthian Christians were told in a clear, unmistakable command to “put away from among yourselves that wicked person” in their assembly who was guilty of immorality and refused to confess it (1 Cor. 5:13). The person guilty of the sin was called “wicked” and was to be removed from them (v. 13). The saints at Thessalonica were told also to “withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us” (2 Thess. 3:6).

“Paul enjoins them to remove themselves from such. The verb *stellesthai* was used earlier in its history for such activities as furling sails. It signifies the withdrawing into oneself, a holding oneself aloof from the offender in question. This is not to be done in a spirit of superiority. The appeal to brotherliness shows that it is part of a man’s duty to the brotherhood that he should not condone the deeds of any who, while claiming the name of brother, nevertheless denies by his actions what the brotherhood stands for.”<sup>9</sup>

Interestingly, when Paul wrote to the same Christians in Corinth and Thessalonica concerning two specific doctrines which were being denied by some among them, he did not command the faithful to separate. Some in the church at Corinth were denying the doctrine of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:12). The Thessalonian Christians were being taught that the predicted Day of the Lord was already present. They were being deceived (2 Thess. 2:2-3). And yet in neither of the above cases was separation from those teaching the false doctrine taught. This leads us to ask two questions. First, must God tell us to separate from brethren holding false doctrine every time He gives revelation about the subject? Second, over which doctrines of the faith are we to break fellowship with other believers? The Bible does not give specific answers to either one of these questions. However, in response to the first we do know God only needs to tell us anything one time for it to be true.

### **Proper Attitude in Separation<sup>10</sup>**

Too often, separatists forget that the biblical doctrine of separation is both positive and negative. The time sequence of these opposites is imperative. Unless there is first of all separation *unto God*, all separation *from apostasy* will be meaningless. The scriptural commands to “earnestly contend for the faith” (Jude 3), to “hold fast the form of sound words” (2 Tim. 1:13) refer to the body of truth committed to us and not to our own personal views. This requires complete

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dedication to the Lord and His Word. Determination to defend an organization or one's own views often replaces the command to contend and "continue in the faith grounded and settled" (Col. 1:23) and to abound in the "work of the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

Opposition to and separation from something is indeed often accomplished by a lack of love, humility, and prayer toward those ensnared in false doctrine. Human nature is such that it is easier to lash out at someone than it is to love, easier to be harsh and to hate the erring one than it is to be humble in spirit, and easier to pronounce judgment than it is to pray for those in error. Yet Scripture clearly reveals that we should exercise love for those from whom we separate, love for God and His truth and not for our own selves (1 Tim. 1:5). Prayers are to be made for all men, even those who hold false doctrine and oppose God's Word. Humility should characterize those who seek to restore one "overtaken in a fault," whatever that trespass may be (Gal. 6:1).

Because some fail to manifest love, prayer, and humility as they preach and practice separation from false doctrine, an erroneous connotation has been created in the minds of many. Unfortunately, separation from false doctrine is not seen as a biblical doctrine because surely a loveless, prayerless, and proud attitude is not condoned in the Bible. True, a bitter and harsh attitude, a failure to pray for enemies of Christ, and pride are wrong. But because these attitudes are sometimes associated with some who separate from apostasy does not make the doctrine of separation unbiblical. What is needed in these days of church-union attempts and widespread adherence to false doctrine is simple obedience to the commands of God—obedience not only to separate from these but also to be completely separated unto God. This latter separation in turn will create within the separatist the biblical attitudes of love, prayer, and humility. The fact is, the commands of Scripture to separate are not completely obeyed until those qualities characterize the believer. Paul put it bluntly when immediately after his exhortation against false doctrine he said, "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, of faith unfeigned" (1 Tim. 1:5).

## **Purpose of Separation**

First and foremost, obedience to the Word of God is the purpose of separation from false doctrine. That is a given. Are there any other answers to the question, *Why separate?* Yes there are. Here are three which I consider major. First, both God and His Word are honored when the child of God obeys. It is a privilege and honor to submit to Scripture and the God of Scripture. Second, obedience to the exhortations of Scripture to separate from false teachers and their teachings also provides a means of defending the doctrinal purity of the church and its testimony. When the church departs from its biblical mandate, it really has no reason to exist. The Holy Spirit of God desires to work through the

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people of God to restrain sin and Satan's work in the world. This cannot be fully effective where there is compromise and alliance with those who reject and are opposed to the truth of God.

Third, there is at least one more purpose of separation from false doctrine. Erring brethren can be helped and even restored when the Scripture command to separate is obeyed. Those who are older in the faith have the responsibility to show to the new and immature Christian the seriousness of their faith. Affiliation with the enemies of the cross spells a lie to all who claim to believe the truth.

Francis Schaeffer bluntly stated the issue of the believer's responsibility toward false doctrine and those who promote it: "Thus it must be said that in spite of (and even because of) one's commitment to evangelism and cooperation among Christians, I can visualize times when the only way to make plain the seriousness of what is involved in regard to a service or an activity where the gospel is going to be preached is not to accept an official part, if men whose doctrine is known to be an enemy are going to be invited to officially participate. In an age of relativity the practice of truth when it is costly is the only way to cause the world to take seriously our protestations concerning truth. Cooperation and unity that do not lead to purity of life and purity of doctrine are just as faulty and incomplete as an orthodoxy which does not lead to a concern for, and a reaching out towards, those who are lost."<sup>11</sup> □

## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian Guardian, 1923).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Arno C. Gaebelein, *The Conflict of the Ages* (Arno C. Gaebelein, Inc., 1933), p. 64.

<sup>4</sup> David F. Wells, *No Place for the Truth or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), p. 118.

<sup>5</sup> John Eadie, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.), p. 382.

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth Wuest, *The Pastoral Epistles in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952), pp. 139-140.

<sup>7</sup> R. V. G. Tasker, *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), pp. 99-100.

<sup>8</sup> The key document upon which this new effort is based is "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium" dated March 29, 1994. Thirty-nine scholars and Christian leaders endorsed this 25-page statement. Some of the better known signers were Colson, Neuhaus, Pat Robertson, J. I. Packer, Os Guinness, Kent Hill, Richard Land, John White, Bill Bright, Avery Dulles, John Cardinal O'Connor, Archbishop Francis Stafford, Bishop Carlos Sevilla, George Weigel, and Michael Novak.

<sup>9</sup> Leon Morris, *The Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), p. 144.

<sup>10</sup> The following is taken in part from the author's *Church Union* (Des Plaines, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1971), pp. 128-129.

<sup>11</sup> Francis Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There* (Chicago: Intervarsity Press, 1968), p. 169.

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# Sanctification by Law, or by Grace? Which Is It?

*That which is enough for justification into Christ  
is enough for sanctification in Christ!*

Bible believing Christians are nearly unanimous in their view that salvation is by grace through faith alone. What many Bible believers are divided over, or ignorant about, is how a person *remains* saved, otherwise known as *progressive sanctification*.

Among fundamental Christians there seems to be a growing lack of discernment when it comes to the doctrine of sanctification. Is one who has been justified by grace now subject to obeying the Law? Or worse yet, are church leaders subjecting their flock to their own self-styled rules, regulations, and whims?

The churches in Galatia had been converted to Christ through the gospel preaching and teaching of the apostle Paul. Yet, there were those who came along when Paul had left, telling the people they needed to follow the Law to *prove* their salvation.

In today's "Galatianized" church, however, it is not always the Old Testament Law that many will try to get people to follow (though many still do so) but a list of "do's and don'ts" to *prove* one's sanctification. How did Paul respond? *O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? (Gal. 3:1-5).*

For instance, a typical "fundamental" church may diagnose a sin issue and then prescribe a three or four step way to overcome the particular sin. The major problem with this type of thinking is that it brings all things back to *man's work* rather than the *work God already provided*. Truly, if salvation is by grace through faith alone, would it not suffice us to realize that sanctification must also be through the same method? The answer, of course, is yes indeed!

How? The Law of God confronts us with our sin, even as a believer. In that regard, we do indeed need the Law, not as a corrective measure for sin but as a measuring stick for it. The only real hope is to trust in the finished work of the cross of Jesus Christ. When penitent believers remember the grace which had been given to them, as well as the grace that they have, they also remember that they "*are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:11).*" Do not mix Law and grace for salvation or for sanctification! □

— Pastor Bob Picard, God's Grace Bible Church, Millbury, MA.



# Prophecy Essay #4



## What Important Events Accompany the Second Advent?

by Manfred Kober, Th.D.

The observant Bible student is surprised at the numerous details given in Scripture describing the Second Advent, undoubtedly the most frequently mentioned prophetic event of Scripture. The following is a tentative effort to place the events surrounding the Second Advent in their correct sequence.

1. **The Second Coming is unexpected though predictable for people living prior to it.** *"And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. ... The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of"* (Matt. 24:39, 50). From the signing of the covenant between Antichrist and Israel, exactly seven years will elapse until the return of Christ. *"And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined"* (Dan. 9:26). And yet, earthlings will be oblivious to the impending judgment.
2. **Atmospheric and stellar disturbances will horrify mankind.** *"And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke"* (Joel 2:30ff.). *"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken"* (Matt. 24:29). *"Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously"* (Isa. 24:23).
3. **Eerie phenomena on earth will cause world-wide consternation.** *"And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke"* (Joel

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2:30). *"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light"* (Zech. 14:6-7).

4. **The sign of the Son of Man will appear in the heavens.** *"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory"* (Matt. 24:30). What that sign is no one knows, but the world will see the return in progress.
  5. **The Son of Man appears in power and glory.** *"And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from he four winds, from one end of heaven to the other"* (Matt. 24:31).
  6. **The earthlings mourn as the Judge approaches.** *"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory"* (Matt. 24:30).
  7. **The saints in heaven descend with the Savior on white horses.** *"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean"* (Rev. 19:11, 14).
  8. **Many Jews see Christ's stigmata and will believe.** *"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn"* (Zech 12:10).
  9. **Angels gather the elect from around the world with trumpet sound.** *"And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other"* (Matt. 24:31).
  10. **An angel invites the fowl of the air to a banquet, to consume the flesh of the invaders of Israel.** *"And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great"* (Rev. 19:17-18).
  11. **Armageddon armies assault the Savior and the saints as they approach.** *"And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army"* (Rev. 19:19).
  12. **A sword of judgment destroys the antagonists.** *"And out of His mouth goeth a*
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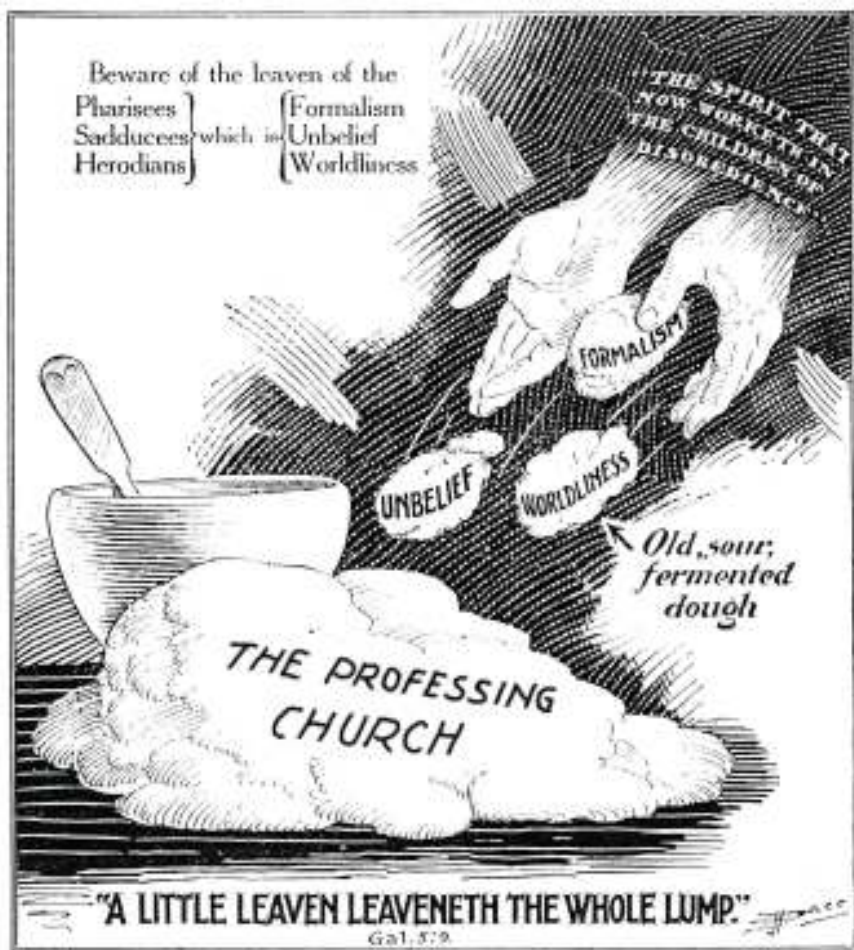
sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And the remnant were slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of His mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh" (Rev. 19:15, 21).

13. **The rebels become disembodied spirits.** "And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth" (Zech. 14:12).
14. **The animals of the invaders perish in a plague.** "And so shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass, and of all the beasts that shall be in these tents, as this plague" (Zech. 14:15).
15. **Some armies decimate each other in fierce combat.** "And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the LORD shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour" (Zech. 14:13).
16. **Judah plunders the riches of the invaders.** "And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance" (Zech. 14:14).
17. **Christ removes Antichrist and the False Prophet and places them into the Lake of Fire.** "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone" (Rev. 19:20).
18. **An angel constrains Satan by placing him into a pit for 1000 years.** "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season" (Rev. 20:1-3).
19. **All evil spirits—possibly a reference to demon forces—are removed from the land.** "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land" (Zech. 13:2).
20. **Tribulation martyrs who were killed for their testimony are resurrected from the dead.** "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Rev. 20:4).

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21. **Old Testament saints who just returned with Christ will receive resurrection bodies.** *“And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt”* (Dan. 12:2). Church age saints will have received their new bodies seven years prior, at the rapture. *“For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first”* (1 Thess. 4:16).
22. **The Jews are judged in the wilderness, presumably Wadi Arava, the valley extending from the Dead Sea to the Red Sea.** *“Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art Thou red in thine apparel, and Thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with Me: for I will tread them in Mine anger, and trample them in My fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon My garments, and I will stain all My raiment”* (Isa. 63:1-3). *“And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord GOD. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant”* (Ezek. 20:34-37). The rebels will be purged out and perish; however, it seems that one-third of the Jews will trust in their Messiah during the tribulation period. *“And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein”* (Zech. 13:8).
23. **The Gentiles are judged from Jerusalem in the Valley of Jehoshaphat.** *“I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for My people and for My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted My land. Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about”* (Joel 3:2, 12). This may be the Kidron Valley or a new east-west valley, but it will definitely be located somewhere near Jerusalem since Christ is seated on His throne in Jerusalem. *“When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory”* (Matt. 25:31).
24. **Christ is officially elevated to the Throne of David by His Father.** *“Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion”* (Psa. 2:6). *“Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously”* (Isa. 24:23).
25. **A banquet will be served for every person on earth in Jerusalem. It will include the best of foods and the finest of drinks.** *“And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined”* (Isa. 25:6).

Christ’s millennial reign will apparently commence officially seventy-five days after the Second Advent (*Ryrie Study Bible*, note on Daniel 12:12). □

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**L**EAVEN IN THE SCRIPTURE USUALLY REFERS TO FALSE DOCTRINE. In Matthew 16:6-12, Jesus told His disciples to “take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees,” and His disciples finally understood “how that He bade them not beware of the leaven of *bread*, but of the *doctrine* of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees” (emphasis added). In Galatians 5:9, the apostle Paul warned the Galatian believers that tolerating even a *little bit* of false teaching is to invite its spread and eventual ruin of the whole fellowship of believers. Truth and error do not mix, and be assured that the latter will finally gain the upper hand unless it is eradicated. False teaching is a dangerous and wicked obstacle to obedience. — *Pastor Dennis Costella*



# “Lord, Thou Knowest All Things”

Arno C. Gaebelein, 1927

“Lord, thou knowest all things.” Such were Peter’s words when, for the third time, the Lord Jesus Christ asked His penitent disciple: “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?” This acknowledgement of the Lord’s omniscience was another expression of Peter’s faith in the deity of Christ. Not alone did he confess Him at Caesarea Philippi (Matthew 16:16), but at another time Peter said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God” (John 6:68-69). Peter and his fellow disciples had, during their days of fellowship with the Lord Jesus, abundant evidence of His attribute of deity in His omniscience.

Only God possesses omniscience. Christ our Lord manifested divine omniscience. He knew all things. He knew the innermost thoughts



of His questioning and disputing followers. He knew the secret plottings of His enemies. What would take place in the hour of His sacrificial death was not hid from Him. He overheard the conversation between Peter and the tax-gatherer, though He was absent from the scene. He knew all about Judas, who would betray Him; about Peter, who would deny Him. Before Nicodemus became concerned about the kingdom, the Lord knew all about him. He laid bare the secrets of the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well. He knew all the men with whom He came in touch “and needed not that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man” (John 2:24-25).

Christ’s omniscience is described in Psalm 139: “LORD, Thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting, and mine uprising, Thou understandest my



thought afar off. Thou compass-  
est my path and my lying down,  
and art acquainted with all my  
ways. For there is not a word in  
my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, Thou  
knowest it altogether. Thou hast be-  
set me behind and before, and laid  
Thine hand upon me. Such knowl-  
edge is too wonderful for me; it is  
high, I cannot attain unto it.”

“Lord, Thou knowest all things!”  
For us, His people, this is a truth  
of unspeakable blessedness and  
comfort. That He who loves us,  
who is our Lord and our friend,  
knows all things, should give us  
daily cheer, daily assurance, daily  
peace, and teach us daily to walk as  
in His sight.

### ***He Knows All about Our Sins***

He knew us long before we existed,  
and before our sins were com-  
mitted He bore them in His body  
on the tree. With the apostle Paul  
we all can say: “He loved *me*; He  
gave Himself for *me*.” Surely such  
knowledge is too wonderful for us!  
It transcends our finite reason. And  
knowing all about us, the sins we  
would commit, the depravity of our  
fallen nature, the corruption of our  
hearts, He loved us and redeemed  
us.

### ***He Knows Our Failures, Our Infirmities, and Our Weaknesses***

“For He knoweth our frame; He

remembereth that we are dust”  
(Psalm 103:14). Since He knows  
our failures, we do not need to fear  
to come to Him and tell Him all  
about them and about our mis-  
takes. This is well-pleasing to Him  
when we bring all these things  
into the light of His countenance,  
never hiding anything from Him  
but confessing our sins and fail-  
ures. And because He knows our  
infirmities, we have His gracious  
sympathy, for “He was in all points  
tempted as we are, yet without sin.”

### ***He Knows Our Sorrows and Griefs***

He knew the sorrows of Israel  
thousands of years ago when they  
were suffering in Egypt. He ap-  
peared in the burning bush as the  
Angel of the LORD, the I AM, and  
He said, “I know their sorrows”  
(Exodus 3:7). So He still knows the  
sorrows of His people. He knows  
what they are, for He Himself in  
His life on earth was “a Man of sor-  
rows, and acquainted with grief.”  
We know that “He hath borne our  
griefs, and carried our sorrows”  
(Isaiah 53:3-4). Therefore, we can  
come to Him at all times with our  
sorrows and grief, for He knows  
and is able to give us the comfort  
we need. “For in that He Himself  
hath suffered being tempted, He  
is able to succour them that are  
tempted” (Hebrews 2:18).

### ***He Knows All Our Burdens and Our Cares***

All our anxieties in temporal things are known to Him. He is interested in them, and His Word tells us, "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and He shall sustain thee" (Psalm 55:22). Knowing our cares, He careth for us (1 Peter 5:7). If we remember this at all times, we shall be able to be careful for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving make our requests known to God (Philippians 4:6).

### ***He Knows Our Various Temptations***

Satan came to sift Peter as wheat, but the Lord saw the tempter coming. Before Satan ever could execute his scheme, the Lord had prayed for Peter; therefore, Peter's faith did not fail, and, though he sinned, Satan could not separate him from his Lord. He knows all the accuser of the brethren is doing; He knows all his wiles and is able to cover His trusting children and deliver them out of the snare. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

He knows our motives; He knows when others misunderstand or misjudge us; He knows every

wrong done to a member of His body; He knows our secret prayer; He knows our tears and, as David said, puts them in His bottle (Psalm 56:8). He knows every little service done in His name and for His sake, as He knows self-sacrifice and suffering for His name.

"The LORD knoweth the way of the righteous" (Psalm 1:6). He "knoweth the days of the upright" (Psalm 37:18); He knows the way and has promised, "I will ... teach thee in the way which thou shalt go" (Psalm 32:8). "He knoweth the secrets of the heart" (Psalm 44:21) as He knows the "soul in adversities" (Psalm 31:7).

What a blessed thing it is, then, to look up and to say with the apostle Peter, "Lord, Thou knowest all things." What rest it brings to the trusting heart! What assurance of safety!

May we trust accordingly. In every trial, faith can say, "The Lord knows all about it." In every sorrow and affliction we can claim the comfort that He knows. Whatever bows us down, whatever the perplexity, however mysterious providence appears, we can meet all by saying, "He knows." Then shall we likewise order our lives in such a way that pleases Him and honors His worthy name. "Lord, Thou knowest all things." □

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# The Logic of the Argument *for* Creation and *Against* Evolution

*Dr. Robert Kofahl  
(1924–2009)*

**B**elievers in evolution who scoff at anybody who believes in creation commonly make the charge that there is no scientific theory of creation. They are right! Creation is a divinely revealed truth. A companion assertion of evolutionists is that there is no scientific evidence for creation. Here they are wrong. Creationists, when confronted with the frontal attack against creation, have often not made a correct response because they do not correctly understand the relationship between science and creation. Consequently, they sometimes try to make creation into a scientific theory.

Most creationists do understand that the evidence for intelligent, purposeful design in nature is evidence for divine creation. Sometimes, however, they have not grasped correctly the logic for the argument from design in nature. The purpose of this essay is to explain that logic.

Creation is, by definition, a divine miracle. A miracle requires God's transcending the laws of nature that He established. Therefore, it cannot be described or explained in scientific terms, nor can it be reproduced by scientists in the laboratory. Consequently, there can be no scientific theory or materialistic mechanism of creation. Conversely, evolutionary theorists claim to be developing theories that explain the evolution of complex living organisms and to be discovering spontaneous materialistic mechanisms that do the job. Therefore, the burden of proof is on the evolutionists. They must devise and test theories that successfully explain the origin of complex biological systems and discover mechanisms which are demonstrably capable of producing them.

Have these successful evolutionary theories and demonstrable mechanisms been discovered? The answer to this crucial question is "no." In the first place, the fossil record fails to provide sequences of intermediate fossils to document a process of gradual evolu-

tion transforming one kind of plant or animal into another kind that possesses new complex design features. And neither classical genetics nor molecular biology has brought to light either testable explanatory theories or actual naturalistic materialistic mechanisms for the production of evolutionary novelty. In other words, evolution has yet to explain the origin of anything really new. But this is what evolutionary theory must do if it is to explain how microbes evolved into university professors in 3 billion years. It must explain how an utterly astounding series of complex new design features appeared one after the other gradually to transform that dumb little germ into an intelligent professor (who believes in evolution?). This explanation has yet to be published. Therefore, evolutionary theory totally fails to do what it is supposed to do: explain the origin of everything in the living world purely in terms of materialistic cause and effect.

Logically there are just two explanations of origins: (1) spontaneous materialistic process (i.e., evolution) and (2) intelligent, purposeful design (i.e., creation). So long as evolutionary science fails to discover the process, divine special creation remains a scientifically viable option for scientists, teachers, and students, for it is the only alternative. Every unexplained complex biological design (remember, none has yet been explained) stands as scientific evidence against evolution and for creation. There are just two logical alternatives: evolution and creation. Either life and species have a naturalistic source, or they have a supernatural source. If theistic evolution is injected into the discussion, it can be logically rejected. Theistic evolution, to be termed “theistic,” must have God supernaturally using the evolutionary process to achieve His goals. But evolutionary theorists insist that their theory is a totally naturalistic one, incorporating only time, chance, and various materialistic effects and processes. Thus, the evolution accepted by secular scientists and theistic evolution are mutually exclusive concepts. One is purposeless, unguided; but the other is somehow guided to achieve the purposes of the Creator. Therefore, belief in theistic evolution may not logically be used to argue for the acceptance of modern evolutionary theory. Excluding theistic evolution, then,



only two alternative explanations remain: spontaneous materialistic evolution and divine special creation. As long as the one—evolution—continues without success at the crucial points, the alternative—creation—remains a scientifically acceptable option.

The negative character of the logic we have outlined has been cited by evolutionists in their case against creation. “All of your evidence for creation is just evidence cited against evolution,” they say; “it is just a ‘God of the gaps’ argument.” This is true, and it must be so by definition, as we have shown above. Nevertheless, the logic is airtight—until they devise a theory of evolution that really works.

But our argument need not, in reality, be exclusively negative. The sum total of human experience and observation for thousands of years has been that complex designs always arise from intelligent, purposeful minds. Never have humans observed a complex design arise from a non-intelligent source. In the case of an organism arising from a fertilized egg cell, evolutionists believe that the design information for the organism is all contained in the cell’s DNA molecules, called genes. So where did that design information come from? In the absence of observational evidence, why should we assume that the design information in an egg did not have an intelligent mind as its source? Why, indeed? Is not the decision to do so founded to a great extent upon one’s beliefs? Yes, it is the choice to believe in God the Creator or to exclude God from one’s view of the world. However, in the light of the universal experience of the human race cited above, we assert that it is more rational to believe in a created rather than an evolved world. And there is no question that belief in a purposefully designed and created world is a happier, emotionally more satisfying belief to hold.

We should mention another tactic against the logic which we have explained. It is to deny that evolution and creation are the only two alternatives. Supposedly there might be more than two alternatives. Our response to this is: “Are there? Please tell us what they might be.” Conceivably, since we do not know everything, there might be a third possibility. But until it shows up, our logic stands unrefuted.

Divine special creation is still a scientifically valid explanation for the origin of life and of all the kinds of living things that exist on the earth or that have existed in the past. This is a faith, but it is a rational faith. And it is, we believe, the better faith to hold in this modern age of science and technology, indeed, in any age. We should proclaim it with confidence and joy (Psalm 100:1-4). □



# Is the Pretribulational Rapture of the Church a “Recent” Doctrine?

Gary Freel

*“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” (1 Thessalonians 4:17)*

**M**ANY TODAY WHO REJECT THE DOCTRINE OF THE PRETRIBULATIONAL RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH perpetuate the tired argument that this teaching is not true because it is a “recent development.” They claim that the pretribulational view—that Jesus Christ will return for His church prior to the seven-year tribulation—was not embraced by Christians until the first half of the nineteenth century; thus, this doctrine was unknown for the first 1800 years of Christianity. Some add that while a relatively small and rather obscure faction of believers initially accepted and taught it, it cannot possibly be a valid biblical teaching. How can we determine whether or not the pretribulational rapture of the church is a legitimate biblical doctrine? Here are four considerations to ponder:

## 1. It is found in Scripture.

God’s Word contains texts proclaiming the fact that the church will be delivered from the time of tribulation that will come upon the entire earth. Such texts indicate that God’s wrath is poured out from the beginning of the tribulation (Rev. 6:15-17) to the final moments of that time of terrible devastation and destruction (Rev. 19:17-21) and that the body of Christ—His church—will not be present during that terrible time (1 Thess. 4:13-5:10; 2 Thess. 2:1-12; Rev. 3:10; 6:1-19:21). We believe these texts and others—understood in their proper context—refute the argument of recency and thus reject the charge that the pretribulational rapture view cannot be true because it is “new.” Pretribulationism was taught in the first century and enscriptured by both the apostles Paul and John.

## 2. Eschatological commentary from the early church on such doctrinal issues is limited, ambiguous, and even contradictory at times.

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The writings of the church fathers, from the close of the first century until the fourth century, do not include the beliefs and practices of every congregation or Christian sect in the world at that time. In fact, these writings usually present information from only one perspective—the perspective of a leader or particular sect dominating a particular area at a particular time.

Most church historians agree that during the first three centuries of the church, the majority of believers held to a premillennial return of Christ—the belief that Jesus will literally return to earth prior to His 1,000-year reign on earth. However, this is not identical with pretribulationism. Some may have held to a pretribulational view (see Mark Cowles’ article “An Examination of Reformed Theology in Light of the Writings of the Early Church Fathers” in *Foundation* magazine, September-October 2006), but it seems that many of the church fathers were not overly concerned with precise prophetic matters, and, as a result, often provided confusing explanations for texts of Scripture, equating prophetic events with specific events and circumstances of their own day. For example, because of the intense persecution they endured, many believed they were already in the tribulation period; subsequently, when the persecution ended in the early fourth century, some thought they had entered the golden age of the millennial kingdom. The point is this—believers today do not have sufficient information concerning what everyone in the early church believed or rejected, so it is very possible that some did embrace pretribulationism. However, it is presumptuous and overreaching to say that *everyone* did not believe in pretribulationism.

### **3. Throughout church history, particular doctrines came under attack at certain times and were, therefore, more fully developed and addressed during these periods.**

Historically in the church age, Christians have often had to prioritize their doctrinal battles—not that some doctrines are unimportant, for all doctrine is important and carefully interwoven by the Author of Scripture. Nevertheless, at certain periods of history, specific doctrines have come under attack, requiring detailed analysis and articulation. For example, the doctrine of salvation (justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone) was diligently addressed during the sixteenth century. Of course, the doctrine of justification by faith *alone* is taught clearly in Scripture and was a settled truth even before the apostle Paul expounded upon it in his letters to the churches in Rome and Galatia in the first century (Gen. 15:6 cf. Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6; Rom. 1:17 cf. Hab. 2:4). It is still under attack even today, and Christians continue to find it necessary to defend this doctrine and articulate it clearly in our modern context.

The timing of the rapture was not a focal issue until some began questioning the fact of the Second Coming itself, particularly in the nineteenth century.

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Thus, it is not surprising that a more thorough examination of the doctrine of the pretribulation rapture is not articulated in great detail until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries since eschatology was not specifically under attack until that period of time. Throughout church history, Christians have believed that Jesus would return in the same way He departed (Acts 1:11). But once theological liberals and higher critics began to raise questions *against* His return (in fulfillment of 2 Peter 3:4), Bible students began earnestly studying various texts pertinent to this doctrine. They outlined the biblical teaching of two future distinct “phases” or “stages” of Christ’s return. It is typical to refer to them both as the *Second Coming* or the *Return of Christ*, but a distinction does exist. First, Jesus returns “for” His saints—the rapture—which will occur prior to the Seventieth Week of Daniel. At the rapture, Jesus comes “in the air” (1 Thess. 4:17). Second, Jesus returns “with” or “followed” by His saints—the revelation—to conquer His foes (Rev. 19:14). At the “revelation” of Jesus Christ, He physically descends all the way to planet earth to ultimately establish His kingdom for 1,000 years, assuming the throne of David in Jerusalem.

#### **4. A lack of available research resources existed on the topics relating to eschatology until the 19<sup>th</sup> century.**

The printing press was not invented and functioning until the fifteenth century, and for most English-speaking people it was illegal to even own a copy of the Scriptures until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Therefore, one should not be surprised by the lack of doctrinal documentation and biblical literature for purposes of research (Bible dictionaries, commentaries, doctrinal studies, etc.). Those religious books that did exist during this time were rather rare and expensive due to the scarcity as well as the time and effort required to print them. Additionally, many sources were written in languages that the common people did not understand (Greek and Latin). It was not until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that good Bible study materials finally became available, and when they finally were readily accessible, they greatly enhanced the layman’s knowledge and application of the Scriptures, particularly the prophetic texts in the Word of God.

Despite the number of plausible explanations as to why the pretribulation rapture was not fully developed and explained in detail until the nineteenth century, our initial point in this article—that *this doctrine is found in God’s Word*—is reason enough to hold to this important truth. Paul refers to the imminent rapture as “the blessed hope” (Titus 2:11-13), and this has been the hope for God’s people throughout the centuries! The fact is, the pretribulation rapture of the church is not a “new” teaching; rather, it has been in place for the church since the truth was revealed to Paul all the way back in the first century when the church began (1 Cor. 15:51-58). □

# FEA NEWS & VIEWS

**A PROMINENT ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIEST RECENTLY REASSERTED THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S BELIEF** that Scripture alone—apart from the interpretation and traditions of the Roman Catholic Church—is insufficient to bring a person to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. In an article titled “Bible Alone?” Father David J. Endres addressed the issue of *Sola Scriptura*—a hallmark of the Protestant Reformation—and argued that “since Scriptural passages can be cited to uphold various beliefs, even contradictory ones, certain passages, especially those from which doctrine can be deduced, must be interpreted by the Church” (*Catholic Digest*, “Bible Alone?” 10-31-17). He cited various arguments to support his assertion (e.g. the first century church did not possess the complete canon; the apostle John desired to speak face-to-face to believers rather than write everything he wanted to tell them; etc.), and yet, each argument ignores what the Scripture says concerning itself—“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim.

3:16-17). And, nowhere in Scripture do we find a particular religious system to be the sole arbiter of Truth. Yet despite this fact, Endres concludes, “Catholics, while affirming the importance of the Scriptures, do not view the Bible alone as sufficient for an understanding of revelation.” He adds, “The Bible and tradition together are the font of God’s self-communication to humanity.” Endres is simply enunciating the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, and Bible-believing Christians today must understand that this belief has not changed.

**THE REJECTION OF DOGMATISM AND THE CURRENT TREND AMONG MANY CHURCHES AND MINISTRIES TO BE THEOLOGICALLY INCLUSIVE** is creating an atmosphere of confusion and uncertainty among professing Christians. In reality, it is a principal reason why the professing church today is so weak and often unrecognizable to the world, and it is a primary reason why many local churches are rife with immature believers who are “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Eph. 4:14). Believers would do well to heed the words of the

late Ernest Pickering: “Ours is a day in which dogmas, especially religious dogmas, are heartily disliked and rejected by many. The term, *dogma*, implies fixed truth, something that is unchangeable. Its concepts are contrary to the modern mind. This is a day when everyone must be open to all viewpoints. According to some, no viewpoint has the right to say that it alone is truth. Systematic theology sets forth propositions as divine truth and thus, fixed and certain. Man, with his evolutionary concept of truth, is not in harmony with this approach, thus the current antipathy to theology as a whole. Bible-believing Christians, however, must always remember that the Church is the ‘pillar and ground of the truth’ (1 Tim. 3:15). Christ declared that He is ‘the truth’ (Jn. 14:6). Our Lord also declared, ‘Thy word is truth’ (Jn. 17:17). The Christian faith is not one of a number of viable religious systems from which men may pick and choose as they desire. It is the **only** true system of divine thought.”

**WHILE THE INTERNET CAN CERTAINLY AID IN PROMOTING THE TRUTH** and spreading the gospel, one recent study reveals the profoundly negative impact it has had on young peoples’ views of church affiliation in general and orthodox Christian doctrine in particular. A Baylor University study titled “Tinkering with Technology and Religion in a Digital Age,” authored by Baylor professor Paul McClure, seems to indicate that the Internet is becoming an authoritative resource for unorthodox views of Christianity and is also pushing young people further away from interest in connecting with a church or religious institution. McClure told Baptist News

Global, “Where the Internet did have an effect ... was with religious affiliation as well as the exclusivism index,” that is, a belief in the idea that all religions “essentially believe and worship the same deity” (Baptist News Global, “Do-It-Yourself Faith on the Rise Thanks to the Web, Study Finds,” 1-22-18). The BNG article noted that McClure’s analysis of a 2010 Gallup poll of 1,714 people “discovered a correlation between increased Internet time and decreased religious affiliation” due to the vast number of religious ideas and texts available online. “That kind of tinkering mentality, or cut-and-paste approach to religion, has been around for a long time,” he said, but added, “Technology just intensifies it.” According to McClure, the Internet enables users to arrive at a customized religion by “making reality fit personal preferences.” This final observation by McClure seems to be the root of the problem today, and most pastors who have witnessed this trend in their own churches would probably admit that people—especially young people—desire to find a religion that fits their own perceptions or lifestyles and desire to “worship” on their own terms rather than on God’s terms. The vast amount of instantaneous information available today is not inherently evil, but when unbelievers or immature Christians begin to “surf the web” and find false teachers—“Christian” or secular—who use the Internet as a platform to disseminate their errors, such individuals will always find what they are looking for. Bible-believing Christians today not only must be acutely aware of the dangers of false teaching so readily available via the Internet, but they also must counter such error with the unchanging truth of God’s Word.

## Also Available from the Fundamental Evangelistic Association



***The Bright Spot: Where Kids Can Grow in Christ*** is a quarterly publication written for elementary-age young people. *The Bright Spot* aims to provide children with a magazine that will help them dig into their Bibles and grow in Christ. It can also be used by Sunday school teachers, camp or Christian school workers, and parents who want to supplement their family devotional times. Each issue includes Bible lessons, practical applications for following God's Word in everyday life, ideas for devotions and Bible memory, and activities and puzzles.



***Feature: A Daily Bible Study Guide*** is a quarterly publication that seeks to guide the Christian into the meat of God's Word each day. *Feature* provides more than just a "thought for the day." It challenges the reader to truly meditate on the Word of God, understand what the text is saying, and then victoriously apply those truths to daily life and ministry. *Feature* uses only the Authorized King James Version and is available as a single subscription as well as in bulk quantities.

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