

# What Do We Hear?

RAY L. STRAUB

**T**HE call of God is an experience of the highest importance. Life takes on new and abundant meaning when the purposes of the Creator begin to manifest themselves in us. It turns us from aimless wanderers into vessels that have been skillfully molded to perform some lastingly valuable function.

When the Holy Spirit fell on the day of Pentecost, it prompted men to become concerned about their future. They sought salvation from the sinner's doom. Peter's message moved men to repent and accept Christ as their Saviour. Following baptism, the gift of the Holy Spirit was assured. In following this procedure, they claimed an ancient promise that was given to them, their children, "...and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39).

This promise was claimed, as Paul later observed to the Romans, (9:24): "Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles."

Consequently, we view with comfort the solace that "... all things work together for good to them that

love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

It takes little more reminding of this call for us to be moved to follow the admonition of Peter, "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth" (2 Pet. 1:10-12).

Often this calling is considered to be the call to repentance only. Truly this is the cordial invitation issued to those thirsting for the water of life, recorded in Revelation 22:17. However, it is more. Our calling is to a vocation. Paul writes, "I... beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (Eph. 4:1).

Acts 9:15 reports the interesting call of the Apostle Paul to a very special purpose. "... He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." This was a demanding commission. It would be interesting to watch a man with such an assignment begin in his efforts to serve a Master that expects so much.

Scripture reveals that this chosen vessel began much like all servants of God. Paul found it difficult to find much reception, even among Christians, due to former hostile relationships. However, he preached with boldness until it became obvious that he had a new calling which demanded respect because it originated in heaven.

The Gospel, boldly preached and defended, generates amazing power. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to



The Church of God (Seventh Day) in Puebla, Puebla, Mexico. The pastor, Aurelio Rodriguez, tells his congregation, "If you do not wish to work you must find a new pastor. I am an active minister who cannot be happy unless the work is moving." Despite the poverty in which many members of this church live, their temple of worship is a monument of their love for God and the Gospel of Christ which is preached here.

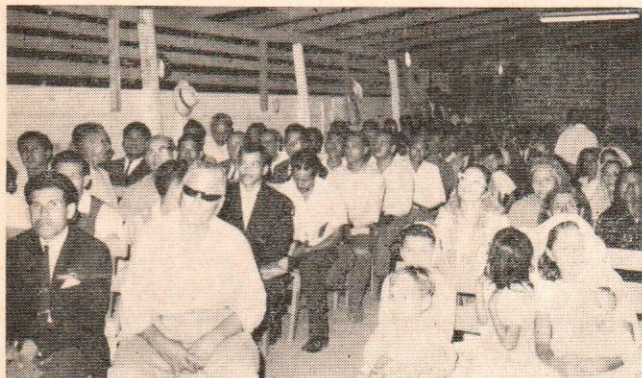
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ELDER STRAUB IS CHAIRMAN OF THE MINISTERIAL DEPARTMENT OF THE CHURCH OF GOD (SEVENTH DAY). HE AND ELDER ROBERT COULTER, CHAIRMAN OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD, ARE CURRENTLY ON A MISSIONARY TOUR OF THE CARIBBEAN AREA. THIS ARTICLE WAS WRITTEN WHILE THEY WERE IN KINGSTON, JAMAICA, W. I.

every one that believeth..." (Rom. 1:16).

"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18).

One need not be any real student of nature to observe that God has instilled into natural life the instinctive desire and method to reproduce itself. Plants have seeds that manage to travel by various means in or-



**Part of the congregation representing a relatively new work in San Salvador, El Salvador, Central America. The building here represents but a beginning of construction of a church building. With the growth of the work here, it was difficult to ascertain just how large the building would need to be once construction begins in earnest.**

der to be transported to where they can begin new life. Some seeds float through the air, others travel by water, others in the fur of animals, etc. In the animal world a complex order of reproduction exists, ranging from the simple reproduction of the cell through the process of *mitosis*, to the complicated genesis of the highly developed human being offspring.

It is similarly the anxious desire of the Christian who is saved by the power of the Gospel to extend the call of God to others. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psalm 126: 6).

Discussion often attempts to resolve the question whether the fruit discussed in John 15:1-8 refers to the fruit of the spirit listed in Galatians 5:22, 23, or whether it refers to new souls won for Christ. A valid consideration suggests that it is generally the fruit of a plant that contains its reproductive qualities. This ought to cause us to reflect seriously about the question which concerns the extent of our work needed to bear fruit. Have we heard the call of God? It is a call to witness to others. Did we hear well?

None can complain that he is involved in a vocation that is slight in the amount of work that needs to be done. The fields are white and ready to harvest. Like the bananas and coconuts of the tropics, this harvest is never out of season. The area demanding attention is the whole world.

This is being written in a hotel room in Kingston, Jamaica, West Indies, where the author and Elder Robert Coulter are concluding an extensive tour to view the work of the Church of God (Seventh Day) in Mexico, Central America, and on islands of the Caribbean. The experiences of this journey have provided valuable insight into the pressing need for every commissioned Christian to take a vital part in the spreading of the Gospel of Christ to every nation.

This is a Gospel that is designed for everyone. On every visit devout men of the faith were found who have embraced this same Gospel which carries divine promises for us all. The message of the Scriptures has universal appeal and supplies basic needs for the longings of men everywhere.

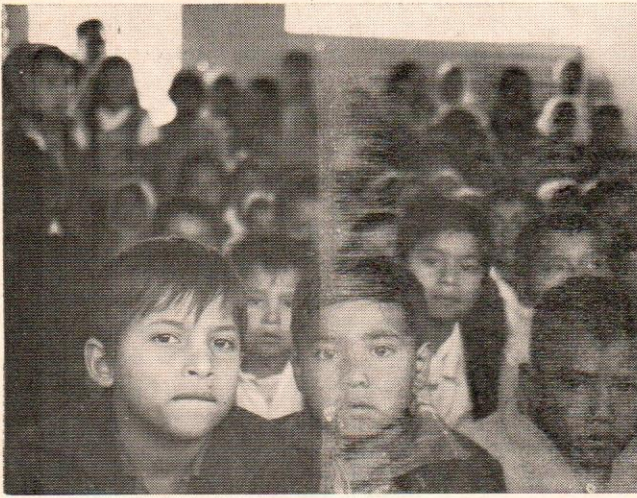
Men become burdened with their own needs so often. They tend to feel the Gospel is for their local church, or for their own nation. Not so. It is evident that God-made humans everywhere share our longings for justification with the Creator, and the saving power of the Son of God can supply it. Men are accepting it with joy. When Jesus sent men to go to all the world, He sent them with a Gospel that has universal appeal. Where the Word is preached with diligence, it brings results.

This is a consistent Gospel. There are so many religions in this world today. Perhaps the only universal claim made by nearly all of them is the claim that theirs is authentic and true. With the abounding confusion, many have concluded that there is no such thing as truth. They make a decision concerning religion that is comfortable and proceed to treat it as a hobby that stimulates interest with varying intensities.



**Some of the leadership of the work in Central America, young, zealous, dedicated. Left to right in front, the General Overseer of the Central American work, Elder Antonio Vega; then Elder Eleazar Fuentes who is in charge of the ministry in the various country churches throughout Central America. In back, the overseer of the work in El Salvador, then the overseer of the work in Honduras. The remaining two are leaders of the work in Guatemala.**

*(Continued on next page)*



**Just a part of the sizeable children's class of the church in Guatemala City, Central America. They are lively, like children everywhere. Who knows either the size or character of their church(es) should our Lord delay His Second Coming until they are grown enough to assume leadership?**

Evidence is abundant to cause men to rely on the promise of God that His Holy Spirit will lead them into all truth. While there may exist the same minor differences of opinion that exist within a local church fellowship, it is a blessing of God to behold the doctrinal unity that can be seen amongst those who believe in the Power of the Word and insist on its accurate interpretation. Truth is not outdated nor successfully discredited. Men everywhere embrace it and dedicate themselves to its promulgation. God, in turn, grants success.

This Gospel is being preached and received with enthusiasm. It has a message of hope and abundant life for all. The aged cling to it faithfully with renewed joy. The youth grasp it and adapt, as best they can, to its discipline. Their ability to do so has been of constant inspiration.

Our visit to Central America found us observing a pronounced endorsement of this observation. The leadership there is youthful and vigorous. It is not only respected but accepted with confidence and enthusiasm. The glories of the present day there appear to be but a prelude to the brighter prospects of the future.

This is a gospel with which men are planning their future. It gives purpose to life which can be found in no other area. It enables men to look beyond the sunset of today, even beyond the sunset of their own lives to the resurrection morning of eternity.

We have had opportunity to see different rituals used in the respectful burial of the dead, but the resurrection morning will be the same for all. Eyes that cannot envision the world of eternity need healing for their blindness. The gospel is for men concerned about a future.

Not only does the gospel present a glimpse into eternity's day, but it also brightens days ahead in this

life. Young people show determination to demonstrate accomplishments beyond those of their parents, which desires meet with parental approval. They will succeed, using the everlasting Gospel to guide their behavior.

One can see so readily the emphatic needs that can be supplied only by trusting in Jesus. No foreign program of any nation, no matter how wealthy, strong, or resourceful can supply that which Jesus has to offer. Payment of taxes is no substitute for our responsibility to see that people everywhere have opportunity to become adopted into the family of God.

No wonder Paul admonishes that we ought to walk worthy of the vocation assigned to us. It is so reasonable that our salvation should be the result of a call. We have responded to the degree that we are saved, but the call was not silenced then. It continues to beckon us. What is it we hear?

We hear it requesting us to tell others of the riches found in Christ Jesus. We hear it prompting us to explain to them the mysteries of the Gospel, hidden from men through past ages. We hear it reminding us of our responsibilities to help others in need. We hear it promising to reward, in abundant measure, those who put unflinching trust in the power and promises of an all-powerful, all-wise heavenly Parent. We hear it instructing us to share our finances and other means so that eternal value can be placed upon them as they supply provision to see that the Gospel is preached.

Missionary work is for everyone. It demands our attention. It sends us to action once it has pierced our preoccupations, and it brings abundant reward when we have exercised faithfulness.



**The new church building in a suburb of Port of Spain, Trinidad, called St. James. This was taken on the day it was dedicated to the service of God. This beautiful structure brings with it a most inspiring story of the victory faith brings, yet not without diligent work on the part of men. This building, that could be sold today for more than \$17,000, has a debt remaining on it of less than \$2,300. In order to secure finance to finish this project a private home had to be mortgaged and personal liability accepted for the loan. God has supplied and blessed, as He always will when faith is exercised.**

So you think you are misunderstood! You ought to try being an immortal soul. Then you would really know what it is to be argued about by the confused!

# The Growing Bewilderment of the Immortal Soul

Ray L. Straub

General Christian thought concludes that man was given an immortal soul when God breathed into Adam the breath of life. This sweet concept romanced the thinking and conversation of Christendom for years. Recent developments, however, have cast many complex and chilling questions into this doctrinal featherbed, and it only gets worse!

For instance, it is oft preached that the soul of man leaves the body at death and slips to heaven, if it has been good, or to sweat out eternity in hell, if it has been delinquent. An immortal soul would *have* to leave, because it remains alert when the body calls it quits. Taking leave, it has to go *somewhere*!

There are bewildering questions that come up. What happens when a person is apparently dead and then suddenly returns to life?

While there may be slight difference in our analysis of what constitutes death, it is generally thought that man dies when his heart ceases to function. This is why particular attention is given to pulse and heartbeat in determining when life is finally gone.

Several have had their hearts stop functioning. As a result of massaging, with the injection of adrenalin and other emergency measures, the life of some returned. Where was the soul during these moments when living apparently ceased, then continued. Did it delay leaving, hoping that the miracle to revive the body would come? Did it momentarily hover over the frantic efforts of doctors, and then return when the body decided it needed its soul a while longer? How far into the distance, up or down, did some souls get before they were recalled?

One lady offered proof that her soul departed and returned. She apparently died but, after prayer was offered for her, was revived. A mes-

sage from her soul to the home's owner revealed that shingles were torn off the corner of his roof and needed fixing. The man went to see and found the report was accurate.

This causes one to wonder more than ever! If the soul was on its way to heaven, having opportunity to see a faulty roof, why request its return? It had it made! If any immortal soul of mine is on its way to heaven where God is, let it fly! I ask not that anyone pray for its return! I would be better off in heaven than here. It would be selfish to want my return. A leaky roof is not important enough to warrant my recall from eternal bliss!

The bewilderment gets worse! A man suffering heart trouble gave instructions that in the event he suffers a fatal attack, he is to be frozen until a cure for his disease is discovered. Then he is to be thawed and repaired. He has deposited \$10,000.00 to pay for his funeral expenses, cost of cold storage and surgery.

Similarly, a madam at a party planned such an experience. Having sufficient funds, she wants others to join her in the deep freeze so she will not be thawed into a completely unfamiliar society. She will deposit \$60,000.00 and invite five others to join her. These friends would include her dress designer and her hairdresser, enabling her to quickly adjust to new fashions.

She felt she ought to ask her husband to join her. He thanked her graciously but explained that he had already agreed to be frozen with his bridge partners. Their plans even eliminated the problem of doling out an inheritance. They *would* "take it with them."

How would you like to be an immortal soul awaiting flight in a situation like this? Immortality may have to tolerate freezing. It appears that the soul will have to deal with a third possibility of a destination at death—heaven, hell, or the deep freeze.

There is an answer to the immortal soul's bewilderment. It is Scripturally supported. You simply remove the immortality characteristics. **OUR SOULS ARE NOT IMMORTAL.**

A review of Genesis 2:7 will show that man *became* a living soul when God breathed into him the breath of life. Nothing about this text indicates that man was *given* an *immortal* soul. The concept of immortality cannot possibly be established from this text. It simply reports the instilling of life, for whatever length it may be, into the form God made from dust.

Ezekiel observes, "... The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Chapter 18: 4, 20). Paul confirms the same basic religious concept in Romans 6:23, "The wages of sin is death..."

"Death is merely separation from God," insist some, attempting to sus-

tain the belief in their soul's immortality. This statement is as interesting as it is unfounded. Not only is it lacking in Biblical endorsement, it doesn't even describe our present acquaintance with the experience of death. We consider that when anything dies, it ceases to live. This is true of trees, flowers, animals, insects; even our own physical bodies. Whence comes this unique death of the soul; that it dies, yet does not?

To place the "separation" definition into further jeopardy, it is, of necessity, confined to the wicked. Surely, the righteous will not be separated from God. Yet, the term death applies to the saved, "... the *dead in Christ* shall rise first" (1 Thess. 4: 16). To suggest that death means separation from God is implying that only the wicked die.

#### **Patriarchs without Immortality**

Not even the patriarchs claimed to have immortality, even though some were sure of their salvation. Job proclaimed without reservation, "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another: though my reins be consumed within me... But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 19:25-27; 23:10).

With this assurance Job observes, "So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep. O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come" (Job 14:12-14).

Lest one consider that Job is using poetic license without regard to doctrinal accuracy, we note an excerpt from Peter's sermon at Pentecost regarding king David, "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre

is with us unto this day" (Acts 2:29). Hebrews 11 gives an inspiring list of the kind of men that faith in God produces. They are devoted and true. By faith, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice (verse 4); Enoch was translated (verse 5); Noah prepared an ark to the saving of his house (verse 7); Abraham, when he was called, obeyed (verse 8), and Sara received strength to conceive seed (verse 11). These are a few of the stalwarts of old times whose lives God inspired.

What about their souls? If they were immortal, they ought surely to be in some heaven, in the Presence of God. Yet verse 13 states clearly, "These all *died* in faith, *not* having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But *now* they *desire* a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (Heb. 11: 13-16.)

This Faith Chapter closes with a summary of several individual feats. It categorizes the various trials suffered by others. So great were these accomplishments of faith, that the world was not worthy of these pilgrims (verse 38). Have their immortal souls ascended?

"And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (Heb. 11:39, 40).

#### **Death, a Sleep**

The conversation Jesus had with His disciples just prior to their arrival in Bethany to awaken their deceased friend, shows that the terms "death" and "sleep" are the same. Jesus had spoken of Lazarus being asleep. The disciples seemed relieved, sensing that the ability to sleep might be a hopeful omen. The

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Master then plainly stated that Lazarus was dead.

Paul reveals to the Corinthians, "... We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" (1 Cor. 15:51). Obviously, sleep here refers to death.

Understanding how these two words may be used together, we are ready to grasp the most important and pointed argument against the existence of the immortal soul in man. It is simply this: if our souls are immortal, they are incapable of experiencing a resurrection. How bewildering for some soul to be told it may anticipate a glorious resurrection when indeed it lacks the essential characteristics of being able to die first!

By simple definition, it is impossible to resurrect something which has never died. If it lives, it is incapable of being revived.

Some might suggest that it never was the immortal soul that was intended for resurrection. What then will be resurrected? our bodies? Hardly. You may wish to have this physical body resurrected, but not I!

Paul speaks of the death of this present body, so that a glorified, celestial, incorruptible, immortal body may spring forth (1 Cor. 15:35-44). Once the present body has served its purpose we are eternally through with it. It will not be resurrected any more than a seed which gives life to a new plant is preserved. If it is preserved, it cannot give life to a seedling.

The soul will be revived. It receives a new body. This helps us to understand why death is designated as a sleep.

Our experiences in sleep cause us to feel that time and living are not in progress. The moment we fall asleep and the moment we awake seem to follow each other directly, even though they may, in reality, be separated by hours. During sleep, the world goes on, but we are not aware. When an anesthetist puts us to sleep, we may undergo serious surgery, including amputation, while we are oblivious to it. We know nothing of the moment. Life resumes when we awaken.

Once we die our alertness ceases. Time goes on, but we are not aware. Following the moment of our decease

comes, for us, the moment of re-awakening—this time at eternity's dawn.

### Judgment at the Resurrection

The immortal soul must also be bewildered, having to ascertain whether it must fly up or slink down at the correct moment when man supposedly gives up his earthly tabernacle. Strange belief. This constitutes judgment. The Scriptures unmistakably teach that judgment comes at the return of our Lord. This is also when the First Resurrection takes place. "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom" (2 Tim. 4:1). Matthew 25 contains three parables, all dealing with the judgment. Each of these involves the return of Jesus.

We have already referred to Paul's revelation that not all will be dead when Jesus comes again. Some will remain alive. This same apostle, in his letter to the Thessalonians, tells of the actual events as they take place when Jesus returns. "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (Middle English meaning, 'go before') them which are asleep" (1 Thess. 4:13-15).

To this point in Paul's explanation we note only that when Christ comes, those who are alive will not go to meet Him ahead of those who have passed away. Providing this comfort, he lists the events as they will happen. "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*: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up *together with them* in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air..." (1 Thess. 4:16, 17).

Bringing immortality to a resurrected soul is not the only glorious ex-

perience accompanying Christ's return to earth. Glorification is awaited by the entire universe.

The plan for the restoration to glory was in the Mind of God before the earth was created. "And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the *eternal purpose* which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:9-11).

"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus *before the world began*" (2 Tim. 1:9).

The purpose of God is revealed in four definite steps, as they are outlined in Romans 8:28-30: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are *the called according to his purpose*. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." So, the purpose of God goes from predestination, to calling, to justification, to glorification.

We have received with grateful triumph the revelation of the mystery of God by the church that the plan of salvation, destined to arrive for ages, is now here. Its arrival brought the call of God to repentance. Those who repent and accept Christ by faith are justified. Three steps are then completed. The fourth remains—glorification.

The time of glorification is spoken of earlier in Romans 8. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the *glory which shall be revealed in us*. For the earnest expectation of the creature (creation) waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature (creation) was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who

hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature (creation) itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (verses 18-23).

Recognizing that it is in the plan of God to begin the restitution (regeneration) of the earth at the return of the King of kings (Acts 3:21; Matt. 19:28), it is fitting that man also should be reawakened then with immortal clothing. "...It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

It would make for tedious reading to give answers to all objections that have been raised against the soul-sleeping doctrine outlined here. Some, however, merit attention.

It is claimed that the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus is literal and describes the ascent of the righteous Lazarus to the bosom of Abraham and the descent of the rich man into hell.

**THE PARABLE IS NOT LITERAL.** It is true that our imaginations have managed to accept a literal hell for singeing sinners, but none can cope with the imaginary sight of Abraham's bosom literally crammed full of righteous people (it would take few to form a crowd on a single man's bosom!), while Father Abraham, with impersonal logic, turns down the pleas of those who bewail not only their own agony, but that which is in store for similarly careless kinfolk, with unceasing, eternal nagging.

Others insist that the preacher in Ecclesiastes stated plainly that the spirit goes back to God Who gave it (chapter 12:7). No argument can be found with this text. However, we stumble at the meaning of the term "spirit" here. Obviously, this passage offers a description of the process given in Genesis 2:7, in reverse. In Genesis, God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the *breath*

*of life.* The preacher speaks of returning to dust because God has received back the spirit He had given. The returning spirit is this breath of life.

Another argument is based on a series of verses in 2 Corinthians 5. Here Paul expresses his feelings in this way, "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life" (verse 4). This is paired with verse 8, "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

One can understand how these two verses, cited together, can be confusing to those who have wistfully felt they possessed something immortal. Careful scrutiny of verse 4 jeopardizes this idea. It ends, "...that mortality might be swallowed up of life." To turn it around, the thought suggests that life swallows up mortality. This does not speak of a removal *from* life, but an experience which causes life to take over a dying sensation. Verse 7 explains how this is done, "We walk by faith, not by sight."

It is obvious that few verses in this chapter could even lend themselves to the possibility of its referring to life *after* death. It speaks of how life in Christ can overshadow hopeless decay. Whether or not Paul's original message here is fully understood, it remains that there is no evidence here that the soul is either immortal, or that it takes leave of the body, passes judgment and receives its eternal inheritance (or sentence) at the moment of death.

One stands on solid ground to accept and teach a Bible-supported description of man's soul. No bewildering questions need answers brought up by scientific discoveries. As long as we comprehend the difference between life and death, we are able to understand fully the status of a man's soul in terms of whether it is awake or asleep. ◀

O thou Who hast given so much to us, give us one thing more, a grateful heart; for Christ's sake.

—George Harbert, quoted in **THE QUIET CORNER** (Revell)

# The

**I**N the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, Jesus tells us what the faith of the saints is. He defines it so plainly that any man that hath an ear can hear and understand and know that this is the faith of the saints, "He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints" (Rev. 13:10). Here it is. Is it yours? Do you believe it? Do you possess this outstanding characteristic of the saints? If not, how can you be of their number? Jesus has made known unto us what the faith of the saints is. It is for us to earnestly contend for the faith that was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

Much stress has rightly been placed upon faith in God and the Lord Jesus Christ; repentance; remission of sin through the blood of Christ; baptism; the resurrection; the second coming of the Lord, and other important doctrines of the true faith. But little, and often times not any, upon that which Jesus takes above all others to explain the faith of the saints. He could have taken some of these other doctrines to define to us the faith of the saints, but He didn't. No matter how man may try to explain this faith otherwise, God has spoken to us in these last days by His Son, and He is the Truth. His words shall stand. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but Jesus' words shall never pass away.

"...Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). With Jesus, we also wonder, for the whole world, as it were, has taken the sword. Militarism in every nation is placing the sword in more and more hands.

# Must One Keep the Sabbath to Be Saved?

What about devoted grandmothers, uncle-preachers, and splendid neighbors... who has the heart to suggest they will die as sinners? Does God not recognize sincerity? Are there Bible answers to these unutterable questions? Read them for yourself!

by RAY L. STRAUB

If one cannot be saved unless he keeps the Sabbath, what about all of the devoted grandmothers, uncle-preachers, and splendid neighbors who impress us with their Christ-like discipline but are unenlightened concerning Sabbath observance? Who has the heart to suggest they will die as sinners?

We are forced to take one of three positions: that keeping Sabbath is essential to salvation; that it is essential only under certain circumstances; or that other Christian virtues can outweigh the necessity of remembering the holy nature of the Sabbath.

Unfortunately, too few people recognize that their opinion on this issue does nothing to change what the Scriptures have established as Truth. Where personal viewpoints and Divine declaration are in contradiction, the human idea is in error. Just because one *deems* it necessary to keep the Sabbath does not *make* it necessary. Neither can a permissive attitude waive a heaven-issued necessity. A man's liberal disposition does not compromise God's austerity, nor can the hard core conservative stem to any degree the flowing abundance of God's grace and mercy.

Eternal life is God's to give under whatever conditions He imposes.

The extent of our willingness to comply in no way affects His demands. There is a complete, unerring finality in the nature of God's Will. The converted heart with the transformed mind knows this. The carnal mind does not. On the basis of Scriptural evidence, we can come to some

rather clear conclusions concerning the necessity of Sabbath observance.

## WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF SIN?

Sin is.

"For the wages of sin is death..." (Romans 6:23). "...The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:4, 20). "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:15).

This does not conclude that the cause of every person's death is his own sins. However, we must begin our search by recognizing the basic truth that death is caused by sin. Sin can bring no other reward.

The term "amoral" refers to those acts or deeds which have no moral implications. They cannot be considered moral or immoral. Certain actions such as shaking hands, attending school, etc. are amoral. Under normal circumstances one hardly judges the moral worth of this type of behavior.

No sin described as such in the Bible can be considered amoral. Sin is immorality, and sin results in death.

## WHAT IS SIN?

There are numerous verses that can be listed to answer this. Three will be presented to establish a needed pattern of thinking.

1 John 5:17 says, "All unrighteousness is sin..." This is but a partial definition. Sin is synonymous with unrighteousness. Sin is unrighteousness, and unrighteousness is sin. How-

ever, providing a synonym for the word does not offer sufficient explanation. What is unrighteousness? More evidence must be sought.

Secondly, James 4:17 states, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." This verse asserts the sin of omission. If we know of some good that we can accomplish and fail to follow through, this failure is sin.

Here again is a partial definition of sin. No explanation is given to inform us what that good is which we should do. There must be some guideline that will direct us to do that which is good.

Finally, 1 John 3:4 informs us that "whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." This offers an excellent, even though general, definition of sin. Sin is transgressing law. All law enforcement efforts throughout the world are directed toward the prevention of law-breaking, and the punishment of those convicted of such transgression.

Breaking a rule (law) in a home is sinning against the home. Breaking city, state, and federal laws is sinning against the city, state and federal governments. Similarly, breaking a law of God is sinning against God.

ACKNOWLEDGING THAT WE SIN WHEN WE BREAK THE LAWS OF GOD WHICH ARE STILL IN EFFECT, ARE NOT THESE LAWS THE ONES LISTED IN 1 JOHN 3:23 AND 1 JOHN 4:21? THERE IS NO MENTION OF THE SABBATH IN THESE.



The laws being referred to in this question enjoin us to believe in Jesus, to love God, and to love one another. 1 John 3:23 says, "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment." 1 John 4:21 states, "And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." The question suggests that these laws have replaced the Ten Commandments.

Actually, rather than to compromise the validity of the Ten Commandments, these "new" laws affirm them. God commands that we love both Him and our fellow man. To exist, love must be expressed. Without such deeds there is no love, regardless of intent or desire. How may this love be expressed?

"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments . . ." (1 John 5:3). Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15:10).

A link is needed to show that the law of God (Ten Commandments) is the expression of love. Luke 10:25-28 reports that a certain lawyer asked the Master, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus asked him, "What is written in the law?" Which law is referred to here? This young Jewish lawyer would hardly quote a "law of Christ" in this instance!

Note the answer He gives: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself."

In Matthew 19:16-22, a rich young ruler came to Jesus also inquiring about eternal life. Jesus' response was practically the same, ". . . If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." The man claimed to have done this from his youth. It would have been impossible for this person to have observed a "new" law of Christ while he was quite young. Which law, then, did he keep from his youth? Verses 18 and 19 clearly associate the Ten Commandments and the expression of love: "He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou

shalt do no murder. Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Romans 13:9 adds, "For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

The laws of faith and love are most appropriate! But, evidence must be found that will enable us to correctly express these virtues. The Ten Commandments are the Scripture-laid path toward such expression. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law" (Romans 3:21).

**IS IT NOT COMMENDABLE TO OBSERVE EIGHT OR NINE OF THE COMMANDMENTS? AFTER ALL, THERE APPEARS TO BE EVIDENCE THAT THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK IS THE LORD'S DAY, GIVING REASON TO OMIT THE FOURTH.**

Indeed it is commendable to keep nine of the commandments! Does this allow us to choose which of the 10 we may wish to break? Perhaps one might choose to obey the fourth and transgress the seventh. He keeps the Sabbath but has no regard for the prohibition against adultery. Is this commendable?

When one transgresses the law of love to his neighbor, he is sinning against the Ten Commandment law. To break *any* commandment is to fall short of the demands of all of them. "If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty" (James 2:8-12).

It is commendable to keep eight or nine commandments, just as it is commendable to wash just one hand before eating. It is good as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough.

Evidence in Holy Writ that the first day of the week is the Lord's Day, has not yet been found, and certainly there is much searching! The Sabbath is the Lord's Day. "Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28).

**DOES GOD RECOGNIZE AND APPRECIATE SINCERITY AND ZEAL?**

Sincerity and zeal refer to degrees of intensity. Paul was both sincere and zealous when he persecuted the Church (Acts 22:3), but this fervor did nothing to make his atrocities acceptable. To the contrary, his aded zeal made him the more intensely wrong.

Paul implies that Israel's zeal actually contributed to their difficulties. "For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:2, 3). One may conclude that this zeal of Israel's in attempting to become righteous in their own way prevented their finding the true righteousness of God.

If one is correct, sincerity and zeal bring greater action and progress to that accuracy. On the other hand, when wrong, sincerity and zeal intensify the error. Zeal is not a cleanser; it is an intensifier. Therefore, God appreciates sincerity and zeal only when they are properly inspired and directed.

**IS IT NOT TRUE THAT EVERY-ONE SINS?**

"We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" (1 John 5:18). "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not com-

mit sin, for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother" (1 John 3:6, 8-10).

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? (Romans 6:1, 2).

One can hardly take the position that even a Christian *never* sins. All of these verses do advise that a child of God does not *live in sin*. He does not practice sinning. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. *And if any man sin*, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1). While we make every attempt to keep from committing sin, the possibility of failing in our goal is ever present.

It is precisely because of this possibility that we have a description of the chastisement of God in Hebrews 12:5-11. It is both interesting and significant that nowhere in this passage is the child of God, even though chastened by a loving Father, ever labeled a sinner.

Therefore, while a member of God's family may fall to an occasional misdeed, he is not classified a sinner. He is not one who deliberately transgresses a command of God, for he cannot be righteous and a sinner at the same time.

#### **WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHO WANT TO FOLLOW GOD ALL THE WAY BUT HAVE NOT BEEN LED OUT OF DARKNESS?**

God's Word indicates that this condition will not continue long. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:6, 7). This precludes the circumstance or possibility of walking with God in darkness. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God..." (John 7:17).

It may seem strangely bigoted and narrow-minded to even consider the possibility that God would lead all of us along the same doctrinal path in view of the many sincere and dedicated people earnestly seeking a close walk with God and a home in His eternity, but are still embracing, preaching, and defending literally hundreds of different beliefs. There appear to be good people in all churches.

There is more to consider. Logic and personal experience have shown us that it is almost always possible to adequately please those we love much. In our own inter-personal relationship we become frustrated when we have no way of knowing whether our deeds please those whose love we crave. Every effort is made to discover a means to their pleasure. Why should this not be true of our love to God? This love for Him will surely prompt us to diligently seek His precise Will for us.

#### **THE GENTILES WERE A LAW UNTO THEMSELVES. PAUL SAYS THAT THEIR LAWS, RECEIVED NATURALLY, RATED WELL WITH THOSE ISSUED TO ISRAEL. DOES NOT THIS SUGGEST THAT GOD CAN BE PLEASED WITHOUT OBSERVING THE TEN COMMANDMENTS?**

A review of Romans, chapter 2, on which this question is based, reveals that the laws written on the conscience of the Gentiles are as meaningful as the law of God given to Israel *in certain situations*. Paul points out that a Jew who *fails* to keep the law of God is no better off than the Gentile who is condemned by his own conscience. A Jew is one who is a Jew inwardly, not outwardly. The fact that a law was issued to the Jews does no more for them in itself than the law which the Gentiles have naturally.

A spiritual law existing amongst carnal minds is reduced in value to that of any other law. The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be (Romans 8:7). Merely to be in possession of a law does little good if that law is not observed.

This does not hold true when a spiritual law is applied to the heart of one who is born of the water and the Spirit (John 3:5).

To imply that the laws which come naturally to the Gentiles are as effective in gaining the pleasure of God as the Ten Commandments are to the Christian would be a serious misunderstanding of this text. It suggests that we do not receive salvation by merely observing law, or by possessing it. It does *not* indicate that observance of the law of God in response to salvation by God's grace is meaningless.

#### **IF ONE IS BORN AGAIN, WILL HE NOT BE SAVED WHETHER HE KEEPS THE LAW OR NOT?**

When God professes love for us He expresses it. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

"We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). If God's love toward us was so boldly expressed, how can we think in terms of responding to that love and fail to express it?

The born-again Christian seeks to obey God. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3). It is the law of God which defines the deeds by which we may show our love to God and man. It is God's law. Sin is the transgression of law. Transgression of God's law is sin against God. The wages of sin is death.

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13). "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:14).

#### **MUST WE CONCLUDE THAT NO ONE WILL BE SAVED UNLESS HE KEEPS THE SABBATH?**

Scriptural evidence strongly implies that God means it when He commands, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." One who recognizes this could hardly have basis to hope for immortality when choosing to ignore a command of God. This law, along with others, reveals to us what the Will of God is.

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\*When Jesus was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane, one of His followers immediately rallied to His defense with sword in hand. This was the perfect time for Jesus to lead a revolt and rally His disciples to physical action. He could have gone around the countryside protesting His unjust apprehension. But this WAS NOT THE "WAY" HE CAME TO TEACH.

Jesus said to His would-be defender: "... Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matthew 26:52). Jesus made it plain throughout His ministry that violence as a means of establishing justice, was not the Father's "way."

How different was Jesus' actions from the words of Roman Catholic Archbishop Robert E. Lucey, of San Antonio, Texas, who remarked recently that war was an instrument of peace and went on to defend war as a moral tool in defense of liberty and justice.

When Jesus sent messengers into a Samaritan village to prepare for His coming, the villagers refused to receive Him, His disciples were filled with indignation and said to the Master, "... Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them...?"

Did Jesus say: "Sure, let us proceed to burn down that village of ungrateful rebels?" NO, JESUS SAID NO SUCH THING! Rather He rebuked His followers by saying: "... Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of."

Jesus went on to say that the "spirit" that His followers were to have was to be like His own. And He came "not to destroy men's lives, but to save them..." (Luke 9:56).

The religious teachers, preachers and leaders of today are not saving "men's lives," but destroying them. For the thing that saves "men's lives" is the Gospel, and the thing that destroys "men's lives," is the doctrine of men. Jesus said: "Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." And the wise Solomon observed: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12).

How can men wear with honor such titles as priest, reverend, minister, pastor, doctor, when they are a dishonor to true Christianity? Some teaching that God is dead, others teaching that He is black and hates the whites, while others teach that He is in fact white and hates the blacks?

This is all ridiculous. Blasphemous, perhaps, is a better word!

Paul was right when he said that these pulpiteers were preaching some other gospel, other than Christ's. Not that there really is another gospel but that "some pervert the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:7).

Never does the true Gospel ever condone burning down a neighbor's house, store or garage. **MOREOVER, IT DOESN'T CONDONE BURNING DOWN AN ENEMY'S PROPERTY EITHER.**

#### *What should the churches do?*

The churches of the country should stop "playing church" and start preaching the **TRUE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST!**

Nothing can rid the world of fornicators, idolaters, thieves, revilers, extortioners, drunkards, any better than the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul reminded the Corinthians that they had been all of these things. But how wonderfully had they changed, being washed and justified "... in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11).

What can change people from living in envy, hate and lusts? Paul says to Titus that all these things we were, "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared," we were changed of this violent nature and "justified by his grace" (Titus 3:3, 4, 7).

How can mob violence and civil disobedience be stopped? The Scriptural teaching is: "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men" (Titus 3:1, 2).

Some of the so-called Christian leaders should take time off and read these verses sometime!

And what can be done about racial

hate? After Peter learned his lesson he wrote: "... Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons." And Paul later wrote "... And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth..." (Acts 10:34, 17:26). On what grounds can we keep blacks out of white churches? Certainly not on these Bible grounds! Then what about 1 John 4:20? "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

#### *Don't use God's name in vain*

The Lord says that he that taketh His name in vain, shall not be "guiltless."

What is done in the world for the world and by the world, is their own business. But the churches that use God's name or His Book or the name of His Son, should either **DO GOD'S WILL, TEACH HIS TRUTH** or **STOP** using **HIS NAME IN VAIN!**

"Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord; Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves anymore; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them" (Ezekiel 34:9, 10).

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**MUST ONE KEEP THE SABBATH TO BE SAVED?**

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The All-wise Father reserves for Himself the complete right to judge mankind's response to His law. Whom He saves is His to determine, never ours. It is our duty to discover the demands of God's will and obey them.

We should feel no sense of condemnation, but rather we ought to have a moving compassion. Much proclaiming of truth remains to be done. Those who have Truth are responsible to preach it, teach it, and otherwise support efforts to send it forth. It demands a sense of urgency. This also is a demand of God that we must obey!