

The Day of the Goddess

by Ray L. Straub

Eastre was a Saxon goddess whose festival was celebrated annually in the Spring. Her name supplies the label for the "Christianized" Easter. With no timid appetite for pagan festivity, followers of Jesus, in their apostasy, designated this festival to celebrate Jesus' resurrection.

Many of the observances still connected with Easter come from the ancient pagan celebration. Christendom, unable to free itself from these enticements, attempted to give them symbolic significance.

For instance, joy previously expressed at the rising of the sun to honor the return of life to the soil became "joy" expressed for the resurrection of Jesus at sunrise. None seemed to be bothered by the fact that the Scriptures clearly state that Jesus did *not* rise at dawn.

Numerous rites involved the building of bonfires. These evolved into the making and burning of candles, sometimes weighing up to 300 pounds, which were lighted in churches on the eve of Easter.

The egg, again symbolic of the promise and coming of new life, surprisingly has become a symbol of the resurrection! Few bother to question the obvious dissimilarities in the issue of life to the newly-formed cell, and the resurgence of vitality occasioned by a resurrection.

Such is the basis for this prominent "Christian" festival. It is named after a pagan goddess, celebrated on the wrong day, for the wrong purpose, using procedures of pagan origin. It is not a day of, nor the celebration of, the resurrection of Jesus Christ the Lord from the dead. It is a celebration to and in honor of the goddess, Eastre.

Using the eternal Word of Truth as the authority, we set forth valid evidence which proves that Jesus resurrected on Sabbath (now called Saturday), not on Sunday. Sunday is not the Lord's Day, nor is Easter

Sunday or any Sunday the day of His victory over death. It is the day of a goddess.

Daniel prophesies in chapter 12:10, "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand."

There is sufficient evidence available to detach the wise Christian from the questionable practice of dedicating a day to the worship of a Saxon goddess. These truths have been sacredly guarded and taught through the years. The wise have understood, while others persist in their ways. Consider the evidence that follows.

The practice of celebrating the resurrection of Jesus once each year suggests it is an anniversary. No anniversary *always* falls on the same day of the week. Rather, birthdays, wedding anniversaries, even Christmas and New Years Day always fall on varying days of the week. None can even pretend that the day designated as the day of the Resurrection is accurately marked. This, in itself, is a misrepresentation.

A consideration of much greater importance is that the commonly accepted Friday crucifixion followed by the Sunday resurrection of Jesus is in direct conflict with a sign that the Christ Himself gave as a confirmation of His Messiahship.

Not only was it a sign of His Messiahship, but He gave it with the added emphasis that it was *the only* sign which would be given to that "evil and adulterous generation." Consider the worth of a follower or disciple who openly and repeatedly witnesses to the belief that his leader failed to fulfill his own sign confirming qualification.

Note carefully the sign given: "But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of

the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:39, 40).

Jesus here states simply that if He remains in the heart of the earth three days and three nights, He is the Messiah. It follows that, should He have failed, He categorically excused that generation from accepting Him as the Messiah.

One recognizes quickly that there are not three days and three nights between Friday afternoon and Sunday morning. At the same time, none have concluded that Jesus issued the above-stated sign to the then-present generation and then wholly ignored it. Obviously, something is wrong. If Jesus was in the heart of the earth three days and three nights, there is miscalculation concerning the commonly accepted time of His crucifixion and resurrection. This error has deluded Christendom into imagining they celebrate the Resurrection Day, when it is fictitious. It remains merely the day of the goddess, Eastre.

No doubt there are many who stand ready to prove from their Bibles that the Gospels, located at the beginning of the New Testament, all teach that Jesus came forth from the grave on Sunday morning. They will find themselves unable to prove any such statement, for it is nowhere recorded that Jesus exited the tomb on Sunday morning. Beginning with Mark, a review will reveal that each of the three accounts following Matthew reports the emptied tomb. They inform us that Jesus had already resurrected.

Some contend that Mark 16:9 pinpoints the time of the Resurrection. The verse reports, "Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene . . ." The verb form "was risen"

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en" is used here in its *indefinite* past tense. It denotes action that has passed, signalling no specific time.

The context of this 16th chapter of Mark supports this assertion. One notes from this ninth verse that when Jesus was risen He appeared first to Mary Magdalene. Looking backward in this same chapter to Verse 1 we are informed that ". . . when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene . . . had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him." The verses that follow tell how that upon their arrival, Mary and the two ladies with her found that the stone sealing the tomb was rolled away from the entrance revealing only emptiness. This incident proves that Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene was sometime *after* the resurrection. We must conclude that the reference to "early the first day of the week," in Mark 16:9 designates the approximate time of His appearance to Mary, rather than the time of Jesus' resurrection.

Luke 24:1-3 says, "Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus." This reference offers no information concerning the actual time that Jesus left the grave.

John 20:1 is also inconclusive. "The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre."

The verses following give an interesting account of the behavior of those who first heard of the incredible victory over death. Nothing tells of the exact time of the resurrection.

The first Gospel receives final review on this matter. It offers the *only* account of the Resurrection. It tells how and when it happened.

"In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it" (Matthew 28:1-3).

An analysis of the first part of the first verse will give valuable light on the time element involving Jesus' release from the tomb.

Note the words, "In the end of the Sabbath." This event could not have taken place *in* the Sabbath *and* on the first day of the week, also.

Care must be exercised in the consideration of the verb, "to dawn," used here in its infinitive form. This is the *verb*, NOT the *noun*. The *noun* refers to the time of day near sunrise, at day-break. The *verb* can have reference to the drawing on of a day, to grow light. It *can also* mean simply to draw on, to begin to appear.

Which of these meanings is used here? Obviously, it cannot refer to the time of day when light begins to appear, because we have already read from John 20:1, that a visit was made to the tomb when it was yet dark, *before dawn*, and Jesus was already gone. Further, Matthew 28:1, uses the verb in this manner: "as it began to dawn toward . . ." which clearly implies that it was *drawing* toward, or approaching the first day of the week. To move *toward* something is indication that one has *not yet* arrived.

Confusion has resulted from overlooking the existence of two Sabbaths observed during the time of Jesus' decease.

Action recorded here took place "in the end of the Sabbath." Since time was still heading toward the first day of the week, we must understand that the first day of the week had not yet arrived. Jesus arose from the grave on Sabbath. Subsequent accounts which mention the first day of the week report only that the resurrection had already taken place.

Having our attention directed to the importance of establishing the length of Jesus' entombment as three days and three nights, and recognizing that His resurrection took place on Sabbath at sunset when the first day of the week was still approaching, we stand ready to determine the precise time element involved in His crucifixion. Obviously, it could not have been late on Friday afternoon, because that would allow but one day and one night for the Son of man to be in the heart of the earth.

Confusion has resulted from overlooking the existence of two Sabbaths observed during the time of Jesus' decease. Many have been aware that the event of His crucifixion took place during the Passover season, but few have considered that this Passover sabbath helps us to straighten out the time element which allows the fulfillment of the three-day and three-night prediction made by Jesus.

The Passover, mentioned with the Lord's Supper is referred to in all four Gospels (Matthew 26:17; Mark 14:11; Luke 22:15; and John 13:1). The day preceding the Passover is called a preparation day. "And it was the preparation of the passover . . ." (John 19:14). Since the Passover was an annual feast, it fell on various days of the week. It follows that the day before the

Passover would also fall on various days of the week. There is no reason to conclude that this preparation day was a Friday.

Further evidence to indicate that the Sabbath in question was not the weekly seventh-day Sabbath is shown in John 19:31, "The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs be broken, and that they might be taken away." A "high" sabbath was a large, or loud sabbath, meaning that the Passover was a prominent, widely celebrated sabbath. Any suggestion that the high sabbath was one upon which a festival Sabbath and the weekly Sabbath coincided is without foundation. No recognized authority will support this definition of convenience.

There is also imposing evidence that a weekly Friday passed between the Passover sabbath and the weekly Sabbath. This may be determined by the preparation of spices by the ladies who wished to anoint the body of Jesus.

John 19:39 reports that Nicodemus brought spices, a mixture of myrrh and aloes, "about an hundred pound weight" to place into the tomb where the body of the Master was brought shortly after His demise. This seemed to take care of the immediate situation. It must also be remembered that the Jews were anxious to entomb the body of Jesus because their Sabbath was drawing on. To speed His death, they requested permission to break His legs, but His early expiration made this drastic measure unnecessary.

It is also pointed out in Luke 23:55, 56 that "... the women

also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment."

These two verses introduce some interesting questions. If the Jews were forced to find a tomb nearby into which Jesus' body could be laid before sunset, how could these women possibly have been present to see just how He was laid and still return to their homes, prepare spices (following the purchase of them) and rest on the Sabbath according to the commandment? One must remember here that the commandment did not permit work on part of the Sabbath. The Jews recognized this and made sure that Jesus was buried before the Sabbath.

To show further evidence of the regard these women had for the Sabbath, both Mark (16:1) and Luke (24:1) note carefully that it was not until the Sabbath was past that the women brought the spices to anoint the body of their Master. Matthew's report that they came in the end of the Sabbath makes no mention of spices. The accounts given by the gospel writers give clear impression that these devotees of Jesus had ample regard for the sacred nature of the Sabbath. This being true, when might they have prepared their spices without desecrating the Sabbath's sanctity? It had to be on Friday, the day before the weekly Sabbath. This allowed ample time to purchase, prepare, and store the spice mixture until after the weekly Sabbath. Following this they took their spices to anoint the body that was resurrected before their arrival at the tomb.

This analysis not only dispels confusion concerning the two Sabbaths that passed while Jesus lay in the tomb, but it gives fulfillment to the prediction of

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We may show the existence of this feast from the 2nd to the 8th Century historically, but to establish from this evidence its validity would be to use history as a standard measure for Christian doctrine in place of the Bible. Some historians have fallen into this error of establishing the validity of this feast from its presence in church history rather than understanding why it is found on the pages of history.

We are thankful to God that those careful and discerning historians and sacred authorities know that this festival cannot be established upon Biblical grounds. In the People's Bible Encyclopedia, we find this interesting statement of fact which concurs with the above statement:

"A festival (Easter) observed in commemoration of our Lord's resurrection. Although not of Apostolic institution, the observance of Easter was early introduced into the church." p. 288, art. Easter.

A previously-quoted authority in his book, "The Two Babylons," in commenting upon the historical origin of Easter, makes this interesting statement of fact:

"It was called Pasch, or the Passover, and though not of Apostolic institution, was very early observed by many professing Christians in commemoration of the death and resurrection of Christ." P. 104, (Emphasis mine).

We quote one more discerning Biblical authority, who shows the true nature and origin of Easter:

"Originally, the spring festival in honor of the Teutonic goddess of light and spring known in Anglo-Saxon as Eastre. As early as the 8th century the name was transferred by the Anglo-Saxons to the Christian festival designed to celebrate the resurrection of Christ."

—The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible, revised & rewritten by H. S. Gehman, p. 145.

In the light of overwhelming Biblical and historical evidence, we must discard Easter as pagan in origin. We, as children of God, cannot honor that which God has not honored. Heathen practices are forbidden in the Old Testament (Jer. 10:1-3; Deut. 18:9-14) and the New Testament (Acts 19:19; Gal. 5:20; Rev. 21:8). We must either take our stand with and for the Lord or we must side with Satan; there is no neutral position in this matter. The Apostle Paul has well summed up the matter when he said:

"Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye can not be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils" (1 Cor. 10:21).

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Jesus that He would remain in the heart of the earth three days and three nights.

Since this presentation begins with an account of the resurrection, we begin our count of the three days counting backwards to the crucifixion. In tabulating this, it must be kept in mind that a day then began at sunset and ended the following sunset. Jesus was resurrected at the end of the weekly Sabbath. This was His third day in the tomb. The ladies prepared their spices on the Friday between the Passover sabbath and the weekly Sabbath. This was the second day. The Passover followed the crucifixion, which prompted the rushed burial of Jesus. That was the first day. Wednesday was the day of the crucifixion.

Jesus was laid in the tomb just before sunset on Wednesday. He was in the tomb Wednesday night and Thursday, one day and one night. He remained there on Thursday night and Friday, two days and two nights. He was in the tomb on Friday night and all day Sab-

bath, resurrecting just before sunset on Sabbath night, making a full three days and three nights. Jesus' prophecy was fulfilled!

That the three-day and three-night sign was significant in Jesus' day was recognized by the chief priests and Pharisees who requested that Pilate seal the tomb and place a guard there. They sensed that any means of fulfilling this prophecy, whether by fair means or foul, would give great prestige and momentum to the cause Jesus initiated. It was their correct opinion that it would be worse to allow fulfillment of this sign than to have left Him go free earlier. Not even Christendom today can appreciate the real meaning of Jesus' sign of His Messiahship to this degree!

There is no Scriptural basis for endorsing the celebration of Easter Sunday. It is not the day of Jesus' resurrection, nor does it bring any honor to Him or His cause. It is the day of the goddess, Eastre, and at best, deludes would-be but unlearned "Christians" into participating in an observance that is almost wholly pagan in origin and practice.

Some may ask, "What is wrong with celebrating Easter, since we are enlightened on the matter?" The question represents a paradox. A desire to celebrate a day that merely brings honor to a Saxon goddess is not a result of enlightenment.

To be a faithful disciple one assumes carefully the discipline outlined by His Master. The discipline offered by our Lord says nothing about illusory rites to honor His resurrection on a fictitious date. It repels the static puppetry offered by ancient pagan rites. To share at some future date the glories of a resurrection, we must put on the mind of Christ, "... who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).

The Value and Use of Prophecy

by Ray L. Straub

In a general sense, darkness is an enemy. Those whose efforts are directed toward harmful activity like to take advantage of the dark, such as the thief, ambusher, or others whose misdeeds find light a handicap. The Bible says that the works of darkness are those of Satan, our enemy. Darkness has a discouraging quality. Honesty and efficiency are aided by ample light.

At times even the believer finds himself in circumstances where he senses the encroachment of darkness. The luster of previous joys vanishes, piercing faith becomes blunted by doubt, his loyalty is questioned by scoffers, and the clarity of his gospel trumpet sound is jammed by noises of fear, anger, and disbelief.

How may one fight off the untiring enemy of darkness? The Christian has several means that are strong enough to guarantee victory. Among the more effective sources of faith, light, and energy are the prophetic revelations in the Bible.

The Bible tells us that "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place..." (2 Peter 1:19).

It is this sure word of prophecy that provides one of the most convincing evidences that God's Word is not only unique in its enduring quality, but it is also accurate in its claim, including that of infallibility in

teaching. The prophecies it records are sure. Many have already been fulfilled, particularly those regarding the manner and meaning of the birth of the only begotten Son of God, Jesus, the Christ.

Even though we have the light of prophecy to dispel darkness, a sense of caution in its interpretation is warranted. Prophecies must be studied with conscientious care. In this field of study deception abounds. Even the most sincere Christian can easily be misled.

A review of the entire second chapter of 2 Peter will provide insight into God's attitude toward false prophets. We will read just the first three verses of this chapter, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not."

Inaccurate prophets exploit the inordinate thirst that many have for the interpretation of prophecy. This overgrown curiosity leads to acceptance of er-

roneous conclusions which in turn provide a false security that is plentiful, but harmful. Many people who have concluded that they understand the meaning of a prophecy actually know nothing more than a single individual's interpretation of it. To quote someone's opinions is not necessarily preaching the truth. Few seem to grasp the difference.

One important truth about prophecy, so often disregarded, is stated simply in 2 Peter 1:20, "Knowing this *first*, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any *private* interpretation." An authority on prophecy does not overlook this characteristic—that it is *not* given for private interpretation.

In contradiction to this principle, entire, sizeable denominations have been founded and structured upon the prophetic utterings of a single individual. They give witness to the world that here was or is a person to whom private interpretations were or are being given. The Bible does not uphold such practice.

Some accept the teachings of religious orders because of the prophetic utterings of a certain affiliated or founding leader. He is the only one allowed to offer interpretations, and they must be accepted by the adherents in order for them to retain their good standing with the order. The teachings are ingested without question, with little concern

demonstrated over whether they are healthful or harmful spiritually.

The fact that no prophecy is of private interpretation is sadly overlooked. There is urgent need for some to learn the vast differences between fact and opinion, revelation and speculation, perception and deception. It is one thing to conform to opinion; quite another to confirm the truth.

Some pseudo-prophets seem appalled by the possibility that the meaning of some, perhaps many of the prophecies given in Scripture are not yet available to man. It is their feeling that one who knows his Bible should understand the meaning of every verse in it, particularly the prophecies. They note that one of the gifts given to the church is the gift of prophecy. They claim the gift, and they feel spirit-led to exercise it.

We recognize that the gifts were given to the Church (not to men for purposes of starting a new church movement), and so there may be some whose burden is directed by the Holy Spirit to uncover the meaning of some prophecies. This endeavor has found Divine blessing and has produced meaningful and well-founded teachings. Seldom, however, has this success been restricted to a single leader without his sharing both the concern and the gift with others.

The availability of the gift of prophecy does not nullify the basic truth that no prophecy is of private interpretation.

There is every reason to be apprehensive when facing the claim that all prophecies should be understood. They simply cannot be. The years have revealed that those claiming the correct interpretation to prophecies always assume that the various prophetic symbols have reference to contemporary powers.

During World War II, for instance, some insisted that Hitler and Mussolini were depicted in

prophetic passages. The demise of these two leaders revealed serious miscalculation. This, however, drained no imagination nor enthusiasm from the erring prophets who then simply amended their inaccuracies.

Were one to list carefully and in detail the scores of speculative predictions made by the unrestrained application of Bible prophecy, he would undoubtedly be dismayed by the high percentage of error. This falls short of meeting the standard and character of truth which is inspired by the Holy Spirit.

We do not mean to imply that many prophecies will reach fulfillment without the Christian's being aware of them. We do suggest that the actual meaning of many prophecies will not be understood until the time approaches when the events predicted actually take place.

The major prophet, Daniel, following the recording of several profound prophecies reports toward the very end of his book, "And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand" (Daniel 12:8-10).

Consistent with this experience, meanings of other predictions will be made clear at the proper time. Until then they are merely used as basis for much guesswork causing many to accept as fact, opinions which have no basis in fact.

Often simple, enlightening prophecies are discounted merely because their meaning and fulfillment are so obvious. Prophecies of the bodily, visible return of Jesus are easily understood. This is a sure word of prophecy which shines brightly into the future.

Prophecies foretelling the development of the nation Israel were preached from pulpits of the Church of God (Seventh Day) for decades before the establishment of this nation in 1948. This was a sure word of prophecy, revealed not only to a single individual, but taught by a ministerial body who had collectively become convinced of this impending development.

The conflicting situation in Jerusalem is another event that was predicted in the Bible. Note how clear the language foretold this distress: "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people..." (Zechariah 12:2, 3).

One may be sure of the meaning of so many prophecies given in Scripture. There is no need to seek out a prophet who imagines possible applications for those prophecies which have not yet become clear. It offends the scholarly disposition of some to suggest that the enlightening quality of Biblical predictions does not come from even the most intelligent and logical speculation. Rather, darkness is dispelled by the sure word of prophecy that is more than a product of private interpretation or conjecture.

The Scriptures give warnings to those who make predictions based upon a Bible prophecy that is proven inaccurate by the turn of world events. We quote a passage from Jeremiah 23 that is caustic in its language. However, those who place their hope and trust in the guidance offered by God's Word will receive it along with its frankness.

"I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. How long shall this be in the heart

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of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart; which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams... The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully..." (Vv. 25-28).

Verses 31 and 32 say, "Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord."

Jesus warned that there would be false prophets gone out into the world. In this same passage found in Matthew 7:15-20, He points out that it is not possible for a tree to bear both good and bad fruit, suggesting that the same holds true of the prophet. He cannot be both accurate and inaccurate, good and bad. "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them," concludes Jesus.

When one attempts to represent God, he takes great care not to misrepresent Him or His Word. We need the light it beams to our times. We need the added faith and courage that come when we observe the accurate fulfillment of a Scriptural prediction. Because the Word is true, it deserves our trust.

When men are led to place interpretations on prophecies that do not come to pass, faith and truth are compromised. We do well to take heed unto the *more sure* word of prophecy.

Salvation is a helmet, not a night-cap!—Vance Havner, PEPPER 'N SALT (Revell)

RADIO LOG

FAITH FOR OUR TIME—Speaker: K. H. Freeman

KALN	Iola, Kans.	1370 kc	KXEL	Waterloo, Iowa	1540 kc
	9:15 a.m. Sabbath			9:00 p.m. Mon.—Fri.	
	9:15 a.m. Sunday		KXEN	St. Louis, Mo.	1010 kc
KBRL	McCook, Nebr.	1300 kc		9:15 a.m. Sabbath	
	9:15 a.m. Sunday		WPIT	Pittsburg, Pa.	730 kc
KBYE	Okla. City, Okla.	890 kc		9:30 a.m. Sunday	
	1:00 p.m. Sabbath		WMBC	McMinnville, Tenn.	960 kc
KCRG	Cedar Rapids, Ia.	1600 kc		12:15 p.m. Sunday	
	5:00 p.m. Sunday		WEHH	Horseheads, N. Y.	1590 kc
KESM	El Dorado Springs, Missouri	1580 kc		8:45 a.m. Sunday	
	9:30 a.m. Sunday		WERX	Grand Rapids, Mich.	1530 kc
KFEQ	St. Joseph, Mo.	680 kc		9:00 a.m. Sunday	
	9:30 a.m. Sunday		WBNI	Boonville, Ind.	1540 kc
KFMJ	Tulsa, Okla.	1050 kc		7:45 a.m. Sunday	
	9:30 a.m. Sunday		WBFG-fm	Detroit, Mich.	98.7 mc
KMO	Tacoma, Wash.	1360 kc		12:15 p.m. Sabbath	
	9:00 a.m. Sunday		WFPA	Ft. Payne, Ala.	1400 kc
KNED	McAlester, Okla.	1150 kc		8:45 a.m. Mon.—Fri.	
	9:15 a.m. Sabbath		WGOC	Kingsport, Tenn.	1090 kc
KSEO	Durant, Okla.	750 kc		9:30 a.m. Sunday	
	7:15 a.m. Sunday		WJBS	Deland, Fla.	1490 kc
KSTL	St. Louis, Mo.	690 kc		9:15 a.m. Sunday	
	11:00 a.m. Sunday		WJOR	South Haven, Mich.	940 kc
KTEL	Walla Walla, Wash.	1490 kc		9:45 a.m. Sunday	
	8:45 a.m. Sunday		WROS	Scottsboro, Ala.	1330 kc
				7:45 a.m. Sabbath	
			WSPD	Toledo, Ohio	1370 kc
				8:15 a.m. Sunday	

Searchlight Bible Broadcast—Speaker, Elder Trinidad Padilla

KCLO	Leavenworth, Kan.	1410 kc	KLEY	Wellington, Kansas	1130 kc
	4:30 p.m. Thursday			9:15 a.m. Sunday	
KGFF	Shawnee, Oklahoma	1450 kc	KSDN	Aberdeen, S.D.	930 kc
	8:45 a.m. Sunday			5:00 p.m. Sunday	
			KMAC	San Antonio, Texas	630 kc
				6:30 p.m. Sun.	

TRUTH FOR TODAY

Speaker, Terril D. Littrell

WMBH	Joplin, Mo.	1450 kc
	8:00 a.m. Sunday	

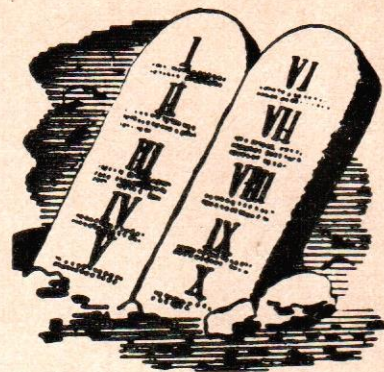
CHURCH OF GOD HOUR

Speaker, Ivan Harlan

KDFD	Van Buren, Ark.	1580 kc
	8:00 a.m. Sunday	

"SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES" BROADCAST—Speaker, L. L. Christenson
 KSWs Roswell, New Mexico 1020 kc—10:15 a.m. Sunday

What Law Does to Grace and Vice Versa



The presence of law does not indicate the absence of grace. There is much serious misunderstanding about the relationship between law and grace.

by Ray L. Straub

Many people are thankful that the grace of God has removed them from the need to observe law. I may be thankful that I have just been given my first million dollars. This places me into the same category as those who express their appreciation for having been relieved of the need to keep God's commandments. I do not have my million, and they have not been removed from the need to observe the decalogue!

Nobody has. Grace does not replace law. The presence of law does not indicate the absence of grace. There is much serious misunderstanding about the relationship between law and grace. There is no need for this. Our willfulness and persistence in amending God's Will makes it so.

One would have difficulty reconciling what the Bible has to say about grace with what is heard from the pulpits of many churches. There is no need to be confused about the effects of grace in the Christian's life. Man's attempt to release himself from the obligation to observe the Ten Commandments has moved him to describe the operation of the grace of God in ways that cannot find support in the Scriptures.

What do we mean when we

use the word "grace"? This will help us to understand its effects on our lives. Grace is often defined as the unmerited favor we received from God. Though uncomfortably trite, this definition is accurate. By sending His grace, God extends His favor to us despite our complete unworthiness to receive it. We have done nothing to earn it. He gives it to us without any consideration as to whether or not we are deserving. No good quality in our lives can indebted God to favor us. His grace brings precious gifts to the unworthy. "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

Some give the impression that they can obligate God to save them by doing good deeds. They seem to think that grace is some kind of a salary, and they work hard to earn it.

Others recognize that the grace of God is a gift, but they feel that it must be supplemented by works. They explain that we are saved by a combination of God's grace and our noble deeds.

One cannot be saved by both grace and works. Those who labor under that misinformation apparently feel that they can

place God into a position where He owes them something. Any such attitude is a betrayal of a woefully inaccurate acquaintance with the meaning of the word "grace." Paul offers a sharp statement which fatally pierces any notion that *both* grace and works may earn or are demanded for our salvation. "And if by grace, then it is no more works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work" (Romans 11:6). A choice is forced here: it is either grace or works. It *cannot* be grace *and* works. These represent two entirely different paths of travel.

Those who seek the grace of God find it. Those who seek to obligate God to save or justify them by doing good works will be frustrated and disappointed, because we can only be saved by grace through faith.

It must be made clear that the grace of God was not introduced during the days reported by the New Testament. It was in operation long before then.

In Romans, chapter 4, one may read how that Abraham was a recipient of the grace of God. This was not granted because this patriarch did good works to earn it. It was given because he expressed a sincere faith. He

believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

It is recorded in Genesis that during the early history of man, he fell into atrocious wickedness. God determined that He would have to destroy man. Amid all of this flagrant sin, there was a devout man who believed and loved God. This venerable Noah found *grace* in the eyes of the Lord (Genesis 6:8). He and his family were saved from the great, destructive flood.

With the institution of the Levitical priesthood came many laws contained in ordinances. These involved sacrificial regulations which served as a covering for sin. They were deeds man could do to compensate for their misdeeds, in the eyes of their Creator.

The letter to the Hebrews informs us that the blood of the various animals sacrificed could not secure a forgiveness for sin. Nonetheless, it was an atonement, even though it had severe limitations.

The passing of years brought more and more attention to the temple rites as a means of relating to and communing with God. It was a point of contact, the place where they could be most sure to find the Lord. It no doubt became more and more logical that these deeds of sacrificing and performing all kinds of rites were earning favor and forgiveness with God. They might well have reasoned that they were obeying what God asked them to do. It was the best they had to offer, and it would be enough. Hence, the almost automatic conclusion was that their works were earning God's favor.

Unfortunately, this was not the case. It is made clear that even Abraham did not find justification because of his *deeds*, but because of his *faith*. Romans 4:4 and 5 informs us that "... to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt, but to him that worketh not, but believeth on him

that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

It is apparent that the grace of God has manifested itself to men of all ages, even during those times when it was mistakenly considered that divinely-instituted rites were earning it. The Almighty has always been willing to send favors despite the fact that those receiving them were unworthy. This attitude on the part of our heavenly Father did not begin under the new covenant.

Recognizing that the gift of grace is not only a New Testament experience, we are ready to determine what effect it has upon the life who receives it. We are particularly interested in determining what our attitude should be toward the law of God after the operation of grace has changed us.

The Bible teaches that the grace of God brings salvation. It grants the forgiveness we need for sins committed. It brings justification in the eyes of God.

It does *not* guarantee complete or general permissiveness. It does *not* assure us that God turns His back on the previous sins that condemned us before God's grace found us. It does *not* award eternal life for the sins that previously threatened to destroy us. It does *not* make the life we lived for the devil acceptable to the Creator. It does *not* make blinders over the eyes of God to where He cannot see the evil of our ways. The grace of God brings forgiveness, *not* license to sin.

Romans 5:20 reports, "Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." It is theorized that this verse reveals the law's function as that of offending, but that the grace of God removes the offender, referring to the law. With the removal of the law, we are relieved of condemnation.

This kind of thinking repre-

sents the general serious misunderstanding of the relationship between law and grace. Its error is made obvious in the paragraph that immediately follows, the first two verses of Romans 6: "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?*" Grace does not remove the law. Instead, it removes the sin that the law exposes. The grace of God both brings forgiveness of sins committed and empowers us to cease sinning. One cannot be dead to sin and carry on a lively indulgence in them.

Were it not for the law, there would be no need for the grace of God. It is easily understood that where there is no law, it is impossible for anyone to be accused of sin. It is solely the presence of law that enables us to appreciate and express sincere thanks for the grace of God, because it brings eternal life to one who had sinned and was worthy of death.

Why should the law have such a dramatic part to play in pointing us toward the grace of God? Simply because the law exposes our imperfections, shortcomings, and sins. The law reveals to us just how far short we fall in serving and pleasing God.

Once the law has mirrored the moral flaws in us, we are able to understand how lost and incomplete we are before God. We see our need to establish a love relationship with Him. We perceive how that our own sins have separated us from our heavenly Parent. It becomes clear that we cannot possibly expect God to acquit us with a declaration of our innocence or worthiness. We have sinned, and we know it. We stand worthy to receive punishment. It is then that the grace of God becomes so welcome and meaningful. It has a way of brushing aside the repentant sinner's guilt. God does so only because He loves us and chooses to do it.

The exposure of our sins, re-

lieved by the mercy of God, will cause the convert to cease sinning. He has no appetite for those deeds that stood between God and him. Now that he has eternal life as his goal instead of destruction, he seeks to remain dead to sin. He hardly expects that God will have a greater tolerance for his sins after conversion than He did previous to the entry of the Holy Spirit.

Note carefully the meaningful passages of Scripture found in 1 John 3:4-10. It reads: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. 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 commit 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."

1 John 5:18 gives a similar message: "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."

The mention of these passages often prompts some to conclude that those referring to them are "perfectionists." This term is thusly applied, not in a behavioral but theological sense, meaning that the Christian, once converted, is empowered and obligated to live perfectly. Pseudo students of Scripture then have but to exact confession of one small mistake to give full proof that no one is perfect.

Therefore, to them they have disproven the "perfectionism" doctrine with smug finality.

This entire approach to this passage represents nothing more than superficial verbal gymnastics. Any references to perfection is not even germane in the study of these important verses.

To attach such a label is much like a political gimmick used by many people in our society. They often run into philosophies or situations which frustrate them but remain out of their control. Instead of persistently concentrating on ways to deal with the problem, they merely label it "Communism," which blackens their opposition and whitewashes them. Everybody is against communism, and to take issue with their label is almost tantamount to being a traitor.

Similarly, when we talk about ceasing to sin following conversion, those whose theology makes no room for observance of the Ten Commandments, quickly attach the label "perfectionism" onto the concept. This gives them much more room for attack.

The passage does not describe perfection. It talks about sinning and doing righteously. It says simply that the sinner is motivated by the devil and belongs to him. The righteous man does not sin. He serves God. Plainly, the sinner sins. The saint lives righteously. There is no reason to push this simple message into complicated extremes.

If it is the sinner that sins, and the righteous man that ceases to sin, obviously, it must call for some criterion to explain what sin is. We have already quoted 1 John 3:4 which defines sin as the transgression of the law. As long as there is difference between sin and righteousness, the need for the law of God remains unquestionably intact.

"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust,

except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet" (Romans 7:7). The Bible does not say that the law is sin. Sin is exposed by the law. The sin is in us. The law did not, nor does it need the grace of God. We do. This same law that confronted us with our need of God continues to remind us of our never-ending dependence upon Him. It points the way to righteousness.

Contrary to widespread belief that the grace of God does away with our obligation to observe the law of God, it makes us more conscious of it than ever. Those who love God aspire to please Him. The law shows us how we may do that. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

God's mercy is extended to sinners who could never survive His justice. It assures us that God will take our sin from us. It does not grant permission to continue in our sinful way. Grace enables us to find our way to God's merciful attention. It does not win God's consent to continue ignoring His righteous laws.

The grace of God will change the sinner to a saint. It will not only remove guilt, but it will help overcome the deed that causes it. It is cleansing. It prompts conversion. It leads to a new birth, the product of which can grow continually in grace and knowledge.

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all man, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:11, 12).

STATEMENT

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