



Seek The Old Paths

“Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths. . . and walk therein”
(Jeremiah 6:16)

Vol. 23, No. 11

November 2012

THE BIRTH OF JESUS: FACT AND FALLACY

Roger D. Campbell

In order to live and die for sinners, “the Word became flesh” and dwelt among men (John 1:14). The Christ’s birth was a necessary part of the Godhead’s plan to save the lost. If you and I want to learn what God says about the birth of Jesus, then we need to read what the Bible says. When it comes to our Lord’s birth, we must separate **fact** from **fallacy**.

Fact: “Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea” (Matt. 2:1), just as the prophet Micah had prophesied (Micah 5:2).

Fallacy: Jesus was born in Jerusalem. That’s what the Book of Mormon says (Alma 7:10).

Fact: Mary was a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus (Matt. 1:24,25), but not afterwards (Matt. 13:55,56; Mark 6:3).

Fallacy: Mary remained a virgin for her entire life. That’s what Catholicism and other similar religious groups teach.

Fact: On the night Jesus was born, an angel of the Lord informed some shepherds in the region of Bethlehem that the Christ had been born. Those shepherds went with haste and found “the Babe lying in a manger” (Luke 2:16).

Fallacy: The wise men who visited the infant Jesus came to the manger at the same time the shepherds did. Modern-day “manger scenes” portray Joseph, Mary, shepherds, and wise men all together around baby Jesus in a manger. In truth, when the wise men/magi arrived where Jesus was, they went

“into the house” (Matt. 2:11). Again, when the shepherds visited Him, He was in a manger; by the time the wise men came, He was in a house.

Fact: Wise men came from the East to see Jesus, bringing Him gifts. They gave Him three types of gifts: “gold, frankincense, and myrrh” (Matt. 2:11).

Fallacy: The Bible says there were three wise men who visited Jesus after He was born. In truth, the Bible does not tell us how many wise men there were. “But, I have always been told there were three, and even in some of our songs, we sing that there were three.” The Bible does not say so. “But, every picture that you see or every movie about Jesus’ birth always shows three wise men.” That may be the case, yet the Bible does not tell us there were three. The Bible says that wise “men” came — “men” is plural, meaning there were at least two. It is possible that there were three, but it is also possible that there were two or ten or more. Since the Bible does not say how many wise men, no human has the right to declare there were three. People need to stop saying and teaching things they cannot prove. Someone says, “But there were three gifts.” Which proves what? It certainly does not prove how many gift-givers there were. A loving son might give his mother two different gifts on her birthday — that would be two gifts from only one giver, right? Here is a Bible example to compare: Jacob sent ten sons to carry six or seven different types of presents to Joseph in

Egypt (Gen. 43:11). So, the number of givers is not always the same as the number of gifts given.

Fact: Jesus was born “in the days of Herod the king” (Matt. 2:1) and when Augustus was emperor of the Roman Empire (Luke 2:1). Biblically speaking, it is also true that He was born “when the fullness of the time had come” (Gal. 4:4).

Fallacy: The Bible gives the specific month and day of Jesus’ birth. What a surprise it is for some people when they learn the truth that nowhere does the Bible record in which month our Lord was born. “Come on, everyone knows that Jesus was born on the 25th of December.” No, my friend, not everyone knows that. In fact, no one knows such a thing — it cannot be proven. There is not a single Bible verse which records either the month or the day of the month when Jesus was born. Thus, men ought to stop speculating and misleading people by declaring the 25th of December to be “Jesus’ birthday.” God’s word says no such thing.

Fact: The first-century Christians worshipped on the first day of every week, and in the process, took the Lord’s Supper as a memorial to the death of Jesus (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-26). There is no Bible record, however, of any early saints carrying out a celebration of Jesus’ birth.

Fallacy: The Bible teaches that believers in Jesus should celebrate

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The Birth of Jesus...



Editorial...

WE ARE IN NEED OF SALVATION

Garland M. Robinson

All men stand in need of salvation because all men have sinned (Rom. 3:10,23). When speaking to a man once about the salvation of his soul, he responded, “saved from what?” Many may have asked this same question: “saved from what? What do you mean saved?” Webster defines “save” as: “to deliver from sin; to rescue or deliver from danger or harm; to preserve or guard from injury, destruction, or loss.”

Everyone who has reached the age of accountability stands in need of the forgiveness of their sins (only the humbleness and attitude of little children characterize heaven, Matt. 18:1-4). It is because of sins and transgressions that men are separated from God! The prophet Isaiah announced this truth, being guided by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In Isaiah 59:1-2 we read that God is willing to save us. He is willing to hear our cries but cannot because **our iniquities** have separated us from him, **our sins** have hid his face from us that he will not hear. Notice that **we** have separated **ourselves from him, and not he from us.**

God cannot tolerate sin. No sin can be in his presence. “*But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger; nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater; hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience*” (Eph. 5:3-6). “*Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children*

of disobedience” (Col. 3:5-6). “*But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death*” (Rev. 21:8).

Sin destroys! Men are therefore lost and undone — doomed because of it! Sins must be forgiven before entrance can be gained into eternal bliss. Therefore, will you be saved from your sins?

God is willing to save sinful man. He “*is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*” (2 Peter 3:9). God would “*...have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth*” (1 Tim. 2:4).

There are two parts in man’s salvation: **God’s part** and **man’s part**. No one will be saved without both parts being present. God has accomplished his part. Jesus Christ went to the cross and died for every man (Heb. 2:9) to make it possible for every man to have forgiveness of sins. Jesus said himself, “*I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do*” (John 17:4). When he hung on the cross he said, “*It is finished*” (John 19:30). Jesus fulfilled all prophecy concerning himself (the Messiah) and completed God’s part of the redemptive plan. The only part lacking is **OUR** part! God is the one that requires man’s part.

Sin is against God’s will. Sin bars us from God’s presence and keeps us out of heaven. If we are not godly, then we are ungodly. Peter said, “*...the heavens and the earth are... reserved unto fire against the day of judgement and perdition of ungodly men*” (2 Peter 3:7). That same destruction belongs to all those who reject God’s will. Knowing this, Peter writes, “*...what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation [living] and godliness*” (2 Peter 3:11). Those who are lost certainly need to

count that God’s longsuffering has given them another day to “*repent and be baptized*” in order to be saved (2 Peter 3:15). There is no promise of tomorrow (Prov. 27:1). Right now **you can** do something about your soul’s lost condition. “*For he saith...behold, NOW is the accepted time; behold, NOW is the day of salvation*” (2 Cor. 6:2).

What **CAN** you do? What **MUST** you do to be saved? What must a person do to have their sins removed so that he/she can stand before God pure and holy, being covered by the blood of Jesus? There are eight examples of conversion recorded in the book of Acts. When they are read carefully we notice that: **1) hearing** the Gospel (Acts 2:37; 4:4; Rom. 10:17), **2) believing** Jesus is the Son of God, the savior (Acts 8:12,37), **3) repenting** of sins (Acts 2:38; 17:30), **4) confessing** Jesus as the Son of God (Acts 8:37), and being **5) baptized** in water (Acts 2:38; 22:16) is essential to receive forgiveness of sins. In **all eight examples** we are specifically told they heard the Gospel and were then baptized!

No one of these five things is any more important than the others and certainly no one of them can be left out. People must **hear** (Rom. 10:17) the word of God to have a deep abiding **faith** (Heb. 11:6) that leads them to **repent** (a change of attitude (heart) and action of life, Acts 17:30). That being done, they must then **confess** (Rom. 10:10) they believe in Jesus as the Son of God and be **baptized** (immersed, Acts 2:38) into water for the forgiveness of their sins. As these five things are completed in baptism, the individual is raised up from the water to walk a newness of life (Rom. 6:4). How can one have a “newness of life” without being baptized? How can one be a “*new creature*” (2 Cor. 5:17) and “*all things be new*” without being baptized? **He cannot!** It is in water baptism he becomes a new person and not before! Water baptism puts one INTO Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27).

Salvation is **IN** Christ (2 Tim. 2:10). How do we get INTO Christ? The Bible answer is by “water baptism.” The only two verses that state this are Romans 6:3 and Galatians 3:27. Both say **one is baptized INTO Christ**. No place else is such a statement found! Baptism is the cul-

minating act that completes one's obedience in the salvation of their soul. Are you now ready to obey today?

Please study these things and obey God's will before it's too late!

The Birth of Jesus...

(Continued from page 81)

Christmas. The word "Christmas" is not in the Bible. The idea of God's children designating a special day to celebrate the birth of His Son is not in the Bible. It is a man-made idea, making worship and service to God in vain (Mark 7:7; Matt. 15:8-9). The New Testament does not authorize a religious feast called "Christmas," so those who respect the authority of the Bible will refrain from engaging in such (Matt. 28:20; Col. 3:17).

We must discern between fact and fallacy. Let us be content to stick with what the word of God says. Not just on this subject, but all subjects.

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DO YOU CARE?

Do you care for your own soul and that of your family and others? The rich man, described in Luke 16:19-31 did not care — at least while he lived in this life. He thought of nothing but himself — oblivious to those around him. But, when he died and opened his eyes on the other side in great agony and torment, he became incredibly aware of the value of his soul and the souls of his brothers. However, that realization came too late! It was too late for him, but not for his brothers. He knew their time was fast approaching to be there with him. He tried to get words of warning to them but there is no way to get word from beyond the grave. It wouldn't do any good anyway. It's through the preaching of God's Word that men are saved. That's why it's so urgent that the word be heralded throughout the world. Unless men hear, they cannot believe, obey and be saved. NOW, is the accepted time, NOW is the day of salvation (2 Cor. 6:2).

— *Garland M. Robinson*

THANKSGIVING!

Tom Wacaster

Most of us enjoy material possessions far and above that of the average world.

This time of year, we enter what is traditionally called the "holiday season." Likely our busy schedules will become even more busy, and our hurry up pace will likely become a dead run for the duration of the year. But still, all in all, this is a most pleasant season of enjoyment. The reunion with loved ones, the abundance of food and the expression of thanksgiving during the holiday season bring joy and happiness to the truly appreciative. How grateful we should be for the blessings God has given us.

May I suggest two things for your consideration this holiday season? 1) Consider what you have, not what you lack. Most of us enjoy material possessions far and above that of the average world. Be grateful for God's provisions, and even more thankful for those little "extras" that make life enjoyable. 2) Spend some time to meditate upon God's goodness to you. Get off by yourself and say a little prayer to Him from Whom all blessings flow, and that in rich abundance. 3) Finally, realize that with increased blessings come increased responsibility. Read Luke 16:19-27, Matthew 25 and Luke 12:45-48. Ask yourself if you are properly sharing what you have with those who have not.

Consider this thought provoking analysis of how blessed many of us truly are:

If you own just one Bible, you are abundantly blessed. 1/3 of the world does not have access to even one.

If you woke up this morning with more health than illness, you are more blessed than the million who will not survive the week.

If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture or the pangs of starvation, you are ahead of 500 million people around the world.

If you attend a church meeting without fear of harassment, arrest or torture of death, you are more blessed than almost three billion people in the world.

If you have food in your refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof over your head and a place to sleep, you are richer than 75% of this world.

If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish someplace, you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy.

If your parents are still married and alive, you are very rare, even in the United States.

If you hold up your head with a smile on your face and are truly thankful, you are blessed because the majority can, but most do not.

If you can hold someone's hand, hug them or even touch them on the shoulder, you are blessed because you can offer God's healing touch.

If you prayed yesterday and today, you are in the minority because you believe in God's willingness to hear and answer prayer.

If you can read this message, you are more blessed than over two billion people in the world that cannot read anything at all.

Have a Happy Thanksgiving!

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SEEKING THE LOST

Ronnie Whittemore

In one of the clearest passages of the Bible that explains Jesus' mission on this earth, Jesus said, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Before His ascension into heaven, Jesus charged His apostles, saying, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16).

The first place in which they would preach the Gospel of Christ was Jerusalem (Luke 24:46-47). After the "good news of salvation" was preached in this great city, the apostles and disciples preached in Judea, Samaria and the rest of the world (Acts 1:8; 8:12; Col. 1:23).

The charge that Jesus issued nearly 2,000 years ago did not end with the apostles or the Christians of the first century. Jesus' challenge has been issued to every Christian in every generation. In Matthew's account of the unlimited commission, Jesus told His apostles, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matt. 28:19-20). The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). Therefore, it is the duty of every Christian to "seek and save the lost."

By making an acrostic out of the word, L-O-S-T, we can learn some valuable points that will encourage and admonish us to accept and fulfill this great command of the Lord.

LOVE

The first letter of the word, "LOST," is "L" which is also the first letter of the word, "LOVE." If God's people are going to "seek and save the lost," then they must have love and concern for the souls of others. The apostle John revealed our true

motive for loving God. He wrote, "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). The heavenly Father demonstrated His love by designing a plan of redemption that included the sending of His only begotten Son into the world (John 3:16). Jesus demonstrated His great love by being a willing sacrifice upon the cruel cross of Calvary (Heb. 12:2).

It is much easier to love someone that reciprocates that love (Matt. 5:46-48). However, Jesus died on the cross for sinners, even His enemies (Rom. 5:8-9)! When we reach the understanding that every man possesses a soul and that soul is valuable, yea priceless (Matt. 16:26), then we will be motivated by LOVE for the souls of men and women to "seek and save the lost."

OPTIMISM

The second letter of the word "LOST," is the letter "O" which is the first letter of the word, "OPTIMISM." Perhaps one reason God's people fail to "seek and save the lost" is that they lack this ingredient. Skepticism and pessimism are much more common characteristics in this world. Everyone and everything are under some kind of suspicion. Based upon the actions of this world, certainly wisdom dictates that precaution be exercised. Yet, however wicked this world may be, there is always HOPE that someone will obey the Gospel. It appears that Ananias was very skeptical of preaching the Gospel to Saul of Tarsus, yet Saul obeyed when he heard the Gospel!

Dear reader, have you figured out a formula by which you can automatically know who will obey the Gospel and who will not? We are sometimes surprised and also ashamed when people that are the vilest (in our judgment) obey the Gospel. The only secure way of pricking the conscience of the honest and sincere is to "preach the gospel to every creature."

We must remember that as proclaimers of the Gospel, it is our charge to "TEACH and PREACH." Conversion is left to the sinner and the power of the Gospel. The Lord did

not challenge His people to "convert the world." He charged them to "preach the gospel." God will give the increase (1 Cor. 3:6; Isa. 55:11).

SIN

The third letter of the word, "LOST" is "S" which is also the first letter of the word, "SIN." Could it be that many brethren hesitate in teaching the Gospel to others because they are not thoroughly convinced of the destructive power of sin? Evidence is overwhelming that this may be the case. When brethren turn to a "social gospel" which is a gospel of another kind (Gal. 1:6-9) and believe that "relationships save rather than the gospel," then they are denying the power of the Gospel to overcome sin (2 Tim. 3:5). The popular doctrine of "Universalism" teaches that God will save everyone regardless of his conduct and behavior. People who believe this devilish doctrine deny the destructive power of sin (Rom. 3:10,23; 6:23; James 1:13-15; Rev. 21:8). When we realize the harm that sin does to the soul, then we will also recognize the urgency of "seeking and saving the lost."

TEACH

The fourth letter of the word, "LOST," is the letter "T" which is also the first letter of the word, "TEACH." Men cannot be saved from their sins unless they are taught the Gospel (John 6:44-45). Jesus' life was filled with action and teaching (Acts 1:1). God's redemptive plan is no longer a mystery. It has been revealed through the inspired word of God (1 Cor. 2:9-13). But men must be taught (Rom. 10:13-17). Brethren usually are hesitant about teaching others; however, every Christian has the ability to tell others what to do to be saved. It is simply a matter of rehearsing what he/she did to save their own soul in light of the Scriptures.

May each of us do his or her part in reaching the lost with the soul-saving message of the Gospel.

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You Will Not Be Saved!

Jerry Joseph

Man has sinned and therefore needs salvation (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). God offers salvation to everyone (Rom. 1:16-17; Titus 2:11-12; 2 Thess. 1:7-9). He does not desire for anyone to be lost (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). Yet, in spite of all that the Lord has done, everyone will not be saved (Matt. 7:13-14; 25:46). Who will not be saved?

You Will Not Be Saved If You...

Desire not to be. God does not and will not save anyone against their own will. He does not force anyone to be saved (Matt. 11:28-30; 1 Tim. 2:4).

Deny God. Notice the words of Hebrew 11:6, *“For he that cometh to God must believe that he is.”* Psalm 14:1 says, *“The fool hath said in his heart there is no God.”*

Despise the grace of God. No one can be saved apart from the grace of God (Eph. 2:5-10; Rom. 3:24). To despise and reject God’s grace is to bring about condemnation on your soul. But, we also must understand that no one is saved by grace ‘alone’ apart from one’s obedient faith (Titus 2:11-12).

Disrespect the Word of God. One must respect and be filled with reverence for God’s Word to the extent that we desire to know it and be willing to do whatever it says. It is all-sufficient when it comes to guiding us to Heaven (2 Peter 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:15-17).

Devise your own plan of salvation. The Gospel of Christ is God’s power unto salvation (Rom. 1:16-17). Following our own plans will not work (Jer. 10:23; Rom. 10:1-3).

Determine not to forgive others. *“But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses”* (Matt. 6:15). If we are unforgiving we will not be forgiven by God.

Declare that what you are religiously does not matter with God. In the book of Acts we see the Jews on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8), Cornelius (Acts 10), Paul (Acts 9,11) and Lydia (Acts 16) were religious, but were

religiously wrong. If it matters not what one is religiously, then why were they called upon to change and obey the Gospel?

Deceive yourself into thinking that living a good moral life is all that is demanded. Cornelius (Acts 10 and 11) was a good moral man, but he was not saved until he obeyed the Gospel (Acts 11:14). Being a good moral person is the kind of person the child of God is to be, but it will not make you a child of God.

Decide that faith is the only thing necessary to being saved. Faith is certainly necessary for salvation (John 8:24; Heb. 11:6). But, your faith must be active (work) to bring about salvation. “Faith only” will not produce salvation (James 2:24).

Depart not from your sins. Jesus makes it very plain when He said, *“...except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish”* (Luke 13:3,5). Without turning from sin, salvation is impossible (Acts 2:38; 17:30).

Denounce that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. *“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven”* (Matt. 10:32-33).

Decline to be scripturally baptized. Baptism is essential to salvation. Jesus said, *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned”* (Mark 16:16). *“...Repent and be baptized everyone one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...”* (Acts 2:38). *“Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord”* (Acts 22:16).

From these few points, you can see that everyone will not be saved. How about you? Are you in a saved condition? If not, do you desire to be? If you are to be saved, you must be guided by what the Bible declares. Obey the Gospel today while you have the desire, time and opportunity to do so. That will be the greatest decision you will ever make in your life. **Believe** in Christ, **repent** of your sins, **confess** Christ, be **bap-**

tized and then live a **faithful** life so that Heaven can be your home in the hereafter.

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Baker Church of Christ, Baker, FL...\$25	
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Berea Church of Christ, McMinnville, TN.....	\$100
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Clear Creek C/C, Corinth, MS	\$50
Joe. C. Turbeville.....	\$12
Tom Hughes.....	\$20
Sylvia C/C, Sylvia, KS	\$500
Del Brantley	\$50
Bradford C/C, Bradford, TN	\$100
Jackson St. C/C, Alexandria, LA.....\$100	
Eastside C/C, Locust Grove, OK.....\$300	
Beginning Balance	\$3,456.77
Contributions	\$3,257.00
Debits	
Postage	\$1,615.11
Supplies.....	\$931.22
Paper	\$1,875.00
Ending Balance.....	\$2,292.44

WHY HELL MUST EXIST

Matthew Carver

The passage of time does nothing to erase our sins from God's memory.

The Biblical doctrine of Hell is perhaps one of the most repugnant teachings that Christianity offers to the outside world in the minds of those who stand aloof from the body of Christ. It is so appraised for a number of reasons. Some believe that the existence of such a place as Hell is in conflict with the more amiable characteristics of God, such as His boundless love and mercy. Some believe that the eternal nature of Hell is unjust in view of the sins committed in a world limited by space and time. Still others believe that the prospect of any degree of punishment for one's misdeeds in this life is overtly cruel and therefore unworthy of a God of love and compassion. However, a close examination of Hell both in concept and in Biblical teaching will reveal that it is not only possible for such a place as Hell to exist in the scheme of an all-loving, all-merciful God, but that it is altogether necessary for such a place to exist.

First, **Hell must exist because the enduring and immutable word of God declares that such a place exists.** Jesus spoke clearly and unmistakably about Hell on several occasions throughout His earthly ministry: *"But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire"* (Matt. 5:22). *"And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast [it] from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire"* (Matt. 18:9). *"But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him"* (Luke 12:5). John also had occasion to describe the nature and existence of Hell: *"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the*

book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:14-15).

In speaking of those angels who chose a self-seeking rebellion instead of loyal and devoted service to God, Peter writes that such were "cast into hell" and committed to "chains of darkness" (2 Peter 2:4). Thus, the Bible testifies that Hell exists as a place of punishment and wrath. As the Bible is divinely authored by He who is in a position to know all things and who in fact prepared Hell for specific recipients (see Matt. 25:41), we affirm that Hell must exist because Scripture so informs us.

Second, **Hell must exist as an expression of God's love.** There is no doubt that some will see in this affirmation a twisted logic of sorts. However, careful reasoning concerning God's unbounded love will reveal that such is unquestionably the case. First John 4:16 affirms that "God is love." However, a key feature of love is its persuasive wooing instead of an aggressive coercion. Norman L. Geisler, in his *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, rightly asserts, "A God of love cannot force people to love him" (311). Consequently, there must be a place to receive those individuals who freely reject God's love. If He simply forced Himself upon His creatures and brought them to Heaven against their will, God would occupy the position of a cosmic rapist who simply brushed aside the freedom and dignity of humanity in order to His own gratification. Thus, a God of infinite love will respect and honor the freedom of His creatures to conscientiously reject Him if they so choose. Hell must therefore exist as a place to receive the souls of such individuals for all eternity.

Third, **Hell must exist in order for ultimate justice to prevail.** The idea of justice embodies "the quality of being just, impartial, or fair" ("Justice," def. 2a). The Hebrew conception of justice involved "a state or condition of fairness in disputes" (Swanson, ent. 5477). Thus, the

psalmist proclaims with respect to God, *"Justice and judgment [are] the habitation of thy throne"* (Psa. 89:14). The Greek conception of justice (*ekdikesis*) is similar. In his *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains* based upon the Greek New Testament, James Swanson defines this as "the act of giving justice" with the underlying idea of punishment administered on the basis of that which is rightly deserved (ent. 1689). Thus, Jesus said on one occasion, *"And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them"* (Luke 18:7)? Hence, justice is a component of God's character, and as such, God must act in accordance with that nature. For Him to act contrary to His nature, is to compromise who He is as God. Therefore, there must be a great retribution for all acts of wickedness left unforgiven. In view of this, it is not surprising to find Paul's description of what will transpire at the judgment scene in these terms: *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things [done] in [his] body, according to that he hath done, whether [it be] good or bad"* (2 Cor. 5:10). As a result of this necessity, Hell must necessarily exist as the instrument of divine justice.

The last two reasons given for Hell's existence demonstrate the consistency in the co-existence of God's loving mercy alongside His divine wrath and judgment. However, what shall we say about the charge that "the punishment does not fit the crime?" After all, sins are committed in a temporal world wherein they affect only temporal consequences. A profane word uttered only requires microseconds to speak in our space-time universe. Its effects may make a lasting impression upon others, but even this effect is limited by time. The same could be said of other sins on a larger scale. Theft only takes a limited amount of time to perform and only has consequences

limited to the “time” of this world. Such could also be said for murder, adultery, or lying. How then can an “eternal” punishment be justified for “temporal” sins? The answer is incredibly simple. God is eternal (Deut. 33:27). Consequently, our sins remain before the eyes of God as long as they remain unforgiven. The passage of time does nothing to erase our sins from God’s memory. Therefore, the one who dies in their sins will always remain guilty and worthy of judgment in the mind of God.

When a human being physically dies, the time for appropriating God’s forgiveness through His Son Jesus Christ will have forever passed. The individual who dies in sin will therefore receive punishment for as long as that sin clings to their soul, which in the case of death will be forever. Thus, one is enabled to understand how sins committed in ‘time’ can in fact yield consequences in ‘eternity.’

These facts all serve to underscore the extreme urgency that should attend one’s quest for forgiveness. As members of Christ’s church, we earnestly implore all who have yet to receive God’s forgiveness to refrain from delay. The luxury of waiting for a “convenient season” (Acts 24:25, ASV) is illusory. Life is unpredictable and offers no guarantees for the future (cf. James 4:14-15).

What an unspeakable tragedy to enter into death unprepared and to confront head-on the horrific reality of an eternal Hell!

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UP FROM THE GRAVE HE AROSE

Douglas Hoff

The resurrection of Jesus is the cornerstone of the Christian Faith. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then Christians are following a hoax. However, it can be proved that he did indeed come forth from the grave. Because of this, Christians have the hope (assurance) of one day being resurrected also and enjoying eternal life in heaven with him.

Proof for the resurrection is found in the four accounts of the Gospel (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John). Each writer presents testimony regarding the empty tomb. The New Testament documents are historically accurate accounts. Over the centuries they have been repeatedly verified as being without error. The four accounts of the Gospel were circulated in the first century. If they were not true or contained errors, people would have spoken up to discredit them. Paul reminded king Agrippa and Festus that the crucifixion of Jesus and His resurrection from the grave were not done in a corner, but were well known historical facts (Acts 26:26). Since Matthew, Mark, Luke and John record the tomb was empty, the modern reader can be sure of it.

The stone door sealing the tomb of Jesus had been rolled away and His body was gone. Who did it? There are only two possibilities. Either Jesus was resurrected by God as the Bible says or his dead body was removed by men. But, who among men would want to remove his body from the tomb? None would.

Certainly the **unbelieving Jews** would not want to. They had specifically requested a guard to watch the tomb. They knew Jesus had claimed he would rise the third day. They were even afraid the disciples would come and steal his body to make it appear he had been resurrected. If they had removed his body, they could have shown Jesus to be a fake by presenting his corpse to the public after the tomb was empty on the third day. But they did not do it because they could not. They did not remove his body.

The **Roman soldiers** guarding the tomb would not steal the body of Jesus. The sepulchre had been sealed and they had been ordered to keep it secure. Soldiers who had a man to escape while in their care would lose their lives (cf. Acts 12:18,19; 27:42). Thus, when the body was gone, they were fearful of what might befall them (Matt. 28:11-15).

The **disciples of Jesus** would not have stolen the body. Though the guards were bribed to tell people that his disciples had taken his body, such a story is full of holes. The guards were to say they had fallen asleep while on duty. But, here’s the problem. How would sleeping guards know who stole the body? They would not because they would have been asleep! Also, consider this. How likely would it be for all the guards to be asleep at the same time? Even if they had been asleep, would they not have awakened when they heard someone rolling away the massive stone that covered the mouth of the tomb? Matthew 28:1-5 shows the guards were quite awake when an angel of the Lord rolled the stone away. When they saw the angel they became like “dead men.” Another thing this passage shows is that the two Marys came to the tomb at this time. Thus, they would have seen if the guards were sleeping.

When John came to the tomb the third day and saw that it was empty, he believed (John 20:8). It is not necessary for the modern Bible reader to personally see the risen Christ before he can believe. The risen Savior told Thomas, “...because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed [are] they that have not seen, and [yet] have believed” (John 20:29). Belief comes by examining the credible evidence found in the Scriptures.

Since men did not remove Jesus’ body from the tomb, the only alternative is that Jesus was raised from the dead by the power of God. Read these verses: Matt. 28:5-7; John 21:14; Acts 2:22-24,32; 3:15,26; 4:10; 13:30.

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STOP. I look forward to each one. I have a brother in Christ to add to your list. I am sending a small donation to help with postage. Keep up the good work. I wish for all the very best of life's blessings" ...**L. C. Bigham, Wayne, OK.** "Please remove Clarence Whitman from your mailing list. He went home to God in June 2012. Please add these names to the mailing list" ...**Sharon Johnson, Newport, AR.** "I sent you an email and the computer said 'no match found.' Please let me know if this is the correct address. Many thanks for the work that you do for the Lord" ...**George M. Walker, Milton, FL.** [NOTE: Go to seektheoldpaths.com and click on the CONTACT US/SUBSCRIBE button to send us email.] "Please remove from your mailing list" ...**Barry & Carol Roberts, McMinnville, TN.** "Please add this name to your STOP mailing list. Thank you for your hard work and dedication to the Lord and all the people that are being reached through STOP" ...**Patricia Worm, Conway, AR.** "Please cancel the 'Old Paths' publication you send" ...**name withheld by request, TX.** "Please send me *Seek The Old Paths*" ...**Para Lee Parris, Kansas City, KS.** "I greatly appreciate your publication of *Seek The Old Paths* and the article by Leroy Brownlow. I hope in his second edition of that article he will address the issue of fellowship of those who have been disfellowshipped. If not then, maybe you would. Second Thessalonians 3:6 seems to be a forgotten commandment, especially when it comes to unfaithful family members" ...**Steve Thayer, Higginsville, MO.** [EDITOR'S NOTE: The passage you mention is a COMMAND, not an option. It reads, 'Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.' Church members (our spiritual brothers and sisters) who do not live in harmony with the Scriptures are to be withdrawn from by the brethren — the whole church. Those who walk disorderly, not in step with the New Testament, are to be disciplined by the church. That means the church (made up of its members) can no longer have fellowship with that person. Such a one cannot be used in the public services of the church nor encouraged or counted as though they were faithful. This is to shame the individual and protect the other members from their evil influence (1 Cor. 5:1-11). Those who do not abide by the church's scriptural action in withdrawing from the disorderly member are also to be disciplined. Notice verse 14: 'And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.' Church discipline is not only for the saving of the soul of the one that is sinning, it is also to spare the church from that person's corrupting influence. 'A little leaven, leavens the whole lump.' It also needs pointing out that we're speaking of a 'scriptural' withdrawal of fellowship by the church. That is, the individual being withdrawn from is sinning and refuses to repent. It could be that the church, not the individual(s), is in sin and the faithful member(s) is attempting to get the church to repent and come back to the truth. ...**editor**]. "We enjoy hav-

"I hope this helps a little. I really enjoy *Seek The Old Paths*. It was good to see you. I hope you can keep preaching for years" ...**Leona Thomas, Cookeville, TN.** "Donald Fifer has passed away" ...**Ft. Wayne, IN.** "Thank you for

ing *Seek The Old Paths*. But we have lost some and we ask you to please start sending 20 copies instead of 50. This is a great paper. Keep up the good work" ...**Frank Neal, Murfreesboro, TN.** "I am an avid reader of your publication, *Seek The Old Paths*. I would like to submit a question regarding an article in the August issue written by Lloyd Gale. Brother Gale quoted the scripture from Matthew 15:9, but used the word *doctrine* in the singular form. The word in the scripture is *doctrines*, plural. In 2 John verse 9, the scripture speaks to the *doctrine of Christ* (one doctrine). In Matthew 15:9, 'In vain they worship me. Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men' (more than one doctrine). My question is, does this change the meaning of the verse, to use the singular form in quoting Matthew 15:9? ...**Notre Brown, Alamo, TN.** [ANSWER: You are correct in pointing this out. Thank you. It is a typo that I made and then failed to catch. It should have been *doctrines* (plural). The *doctrine* of the Lord is singular, one. It is truth and the only truth (John 17:17; 8:31-32). The *doctrines* of men are many and they are all error, false. The KJV reads, 'But in vain they do worship me, teaching [for] doctrines the commandments of men.' The ASV reads, 'But in vain do they worship me, Teaching as [their] doctrines the precepts of men.' — *Editor*] "Enclosed is a contribution for *Seek The Old Paths*. Please add a name to your mailing list" ...**name withheld by request, OH.**

Seek The Old Paths is a monthly publication of the **Leoni Church of Christ** and is under the oversight of its elders. It is FREE, being supported by the contributions of both individuals and congregations. Its primary purpose and goal in publication can be found in Jude 3, 2 Tim. 4:2, Titus 1:13, Titus 2:1 and 2 Peter 1:12. All mail received may be published unless it is marked "not for publication." The church building is located at: 6818 McMinnville Hwy, Woodbury, TN 37190.

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