



# Seek The Old Paths

*"Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths... and walk therein"*

(Jeremiah 6:16)

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## How To PICK A PREACHER

*Wayne Coats (1927-2013)*

***I would pick a preacher that has common sense, studies hard, is constrained to preach the Gospel, is temperate in all things, and doesn't expect others to kow-tow to his every whim.***

I am not writing this article based upon a lot of preacher picking experience, in fact, I have never been faced with the serious task of picking a located preacher. I sometimes think the situation might be comparable to selecting a good watermelon out of a large field of melons. One dear old brother remarked, "I've never preached a sermon but I've read the Bible and heard enough preachers to know when a man is preaching the Bible."

I believe if I attempted to pick a preacher to locate with a congregation, I would demand as my number one qualification that a preacher have an unusual amount of *common sense*. Brethren with common sense can determine if a preacher has any common sense. But someone may object that a knowledge of the Bible should be the first priority. If a man is to preach and work with a congregation, common sense would demand that one would study to know the Book. If one knew ever so much Scripture and had no common sense, I would not be interested in supporting him. Common sense is a marvelous quality which is not always so common. Sometimes we may refer to a brother as having a lot of *horse sense* which has been defined as stable thinking. Isaiah said, "*The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth*

*not know, my people do not consider*" (Isa. 1:3).

Back during the thirties, my dad had several mules and mares, and one old donkey. Old John was not the most intelligent animal on the farm but he knew his specific stable or crib. He knew where he belonged. Even a dumb ass knows that much, which is not true of some preachers. A Gospel preacher needs to know where he belongs. He needs to have enough common sense to work within his sphere. We are not born with common sense. One big dummy in a congregation can ruin most everything.

At the Divinity School the curriculum was arranged in order to assist denominational pastors to become Administrators, if that was what they wanted. It is amazing how many youthful Administrators we have who virtually sit at the controls while elders grin. So many of the youth ministers are nothing more than social service Administrators. Honesty demands that we admit this.

A second qualification which I would require if I picked a preacher would be to find a man who *studies very hard*. It seems strange that all the brethren in secular work need to arise early and punch the clock for an eight-hour work day but the preacher can still be in bed snoozing the time away. I know there are brethren who

stay up late to do their studying. God bless them, but there are others who are nothing more than sleeping goofballs. One brother was asked when he studied and his reply was, "I did my studying fifty years ago." It was pretty obvious. Brother N. B. Harde-man used to compare such men to green watermelons, i.e. they got pulled too green. The very height of pleasure for me is to take my trusted Bible in hand or a good sound, sensible book written by a faithful brother, and let the hours flow by. It is difficult to preach on themes where ignorance is so prevalent. I know! There have been subjects assigned for me to deal with in Lectureships concerning which I was totally ignorant. Give me a couple of months to prepare and I promise that by diligent study I can dig out that which I need to present. No preacher should ever get up before an audience and begin to apologize. If he is stupid, dumb or ignorant, the brethren will realize it without having to be told. If a preacher isn't ready, he needs to get ready or not try to preach. Apologetic excuses will not help the situation. Begging for sympathy will not solve the problem of being unprepared.

I would pick a preacher who knows

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**How To Pick A Preacher...**



## Editorial...

# LIBERALISM GOES BEYOND

Garland M. Robinson

**Liberals do not believe the Bible is a rule book, a guide, a model, a pattern that is to be respected and followed.**

Liberals take liberties with God's word/law. Their position does not respect God's law and therefore refuses to be bound by it. In effect liberals say: "I know some say God forbids this or that, but I believe it will be alright to do it anyway. God is a loving God and he won't condemn me for interpreting the Bible my way." Such ideas do not respect God's laws and therefore does not recognize His authority. As a matter of fact, they would tell us we don't know which parts of the Bible are inspired and which parts are not. We will have to ask "them" to tell us. They've drank from the dry and parched cisterns of higher learning in so-called "seminary" schools (often called 'cemetery' schools) for so long they don't know which way is up and which way is down. If they had spent half as much time in God's holy Book, they would be worlds ahead of where they are now. Like Hymenaeus and Philetus, they have erred from the faith. We are specifically told, "*But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some*" (2 Tim. 2:16-19).

The faithful are not buying what they are selling. We know better than that. "*For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God...*" (2 Cor. 2:17). Verse 20 of 2 Timothy 2 says, "*Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*"

**Liberalism allows what God forbids.** Individuals who wander off the "strait and narrow" path to the

left hand (or to the right), don't believe God means what he says. They do not believe the Bible is a rule book, a guide, a model, a pattern that is to be respected and followed. They detest the idea that God actually has his own Will and has given it to man in the Bible. They look at anyone who believes in doing exactly what God says, nothing more and nothing less, with disgust. They'll say something like: "you folks are Bible thumpers, Pharisees. We can't be tied to a set of rules!" However, liberals think they're right and don't recognize they could even possibly be wrong. They don't see they are going beyond the boundaries God has given.

Liberals use all manner of terms and expressions in an effort to cast down those who love the Lord enough to honor and obey his will — terms such as legalists, pharisees(ism), right wingers, narrow minded (while they are broad minded of course). Their attempt is to "poison the well" in the minds of those whom they seek to influence so they will not be receptive to the truth or those who uphold the truth. They promote themselves instead of God.

The "left hand" believes in going beyond God's word — allowing more than God allows. Those on the "left" act without authority from God. Authority is not important to them. They think the principle of authority is silly and foolish and they laugh at those who follow it. To them, it is sinful to see the Bible as "the" absolute pattern — God's blueprint for mankind. However, Colossians 3:17 demands authority for all we say and do. "*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.*"

Those who have gone off course on the "left hand" stand condemned by 2 John 9-11. "*Whosoever trans-*

*gresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into [your] house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.*" The same point is made in First Corinthians 4:6. We are not to think above or beyond that which is written.

Those on the "left hand," denying God's authoritative word, are disruptive to the body of Christ. They are sowing discord and division. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to tell us what to do with those who teach false doctrine and/or cause division. "*Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple*" (Rom. 16:17-18).

Paul went about preaching the unadulterated Gospel in every place. Those who believed it and obeyed became members of the Lord's blood-bought body. Congregations were established every place he went. Following not far behind Paul were disrupters who came tearing down everything that had been built up. In Galatians 2:4 we read, "...that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage." An inspired example as to what is to be done with such troublemakers is found in the next verse. "*To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.*"

God hates those who sow discord (Prov. 6:19). He hates those who teach contrary to his will. In Galatians 1:8-9 we are told such individuals are "accursed" — cut off from God. They are not to be tolerated and no time is to be wasted in refuting their false doctrine. Souls are at stake. "*Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was*" (2

Tim. 3:8-9).

Often those who teach contrary doctrines would have us believe they are “somewhat.” That is, they set themselves forward as being among the “elite”—educated, schooled, learned, enlightened, important. In their mind, they have learned things that others of yesteryear missed and they are here to tell us all about it.

The apostle Paul wrote: “*But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me*” (Gal. 2:6). Paul was an inspired apostle and no one had any more authority than he had. Those considered to be “somewhat” added nothing to his inspired teaching. Both “they” and “he” were all on the same page, so to speak. Neither were superior to the other. The truth is the truth no matter who is teaching it. That was the case in the first century and it is the case now. The truth is the truth whether it is presented from a young preacher just starting out or a seasoned preacher of many years. The truth spoken from a “thus saith the Lord” will destroy the untruth spoken by those holding the highest of academic degrees conferred upon them by man. McGarvey spoke of those who promoted them-

selves as “somewhat,” as the “no-what.” We ought not give them a platform to spew their venom that will damn souls. Time is too short and eternity too long to do otherwise.

It is tragic that their kind are doing the same thing to congregations today that was done in ancient times. Just when some are converted to the truth, there comes along those who are splintering and dividing the body. Such ought not be so!

Notice the words of the Holy Spirit in Galatians 1:6-9: “*I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.* As we said before, so say I now again, *If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*”

Notice also these verses: “...Be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Eph. 4:14). “*Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because*

*of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience*” (Eph. 5:6). “*And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words*” (Col. 2:4). “*Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind*” (Col. 2:18). “*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*” (2 Peter 2:1).

We are to be as the church at Ephesus toward false brethren. The Lord said, “*I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars*” (Rev. 2:2).

The best advice I could give to anyone is: “LOVE THE TRUTH.” Love all the Truth, nothing but the Truth. “*Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*” (John 8:31-32).

## “LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED”

Bill Boyd

***This simple passage is a problem passage for the advocates of a renewed earth. To sustain their theory they must deconstruct our Lord's words and put them back together upside down.***

The words of Jesus to his disciples in John 14:1-3 are among the most comforting and precious in the Scriptures. They are often recited at funerals, sometimes at the very graveside, and thus they are readily written in our hearts. They are easily paired with 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

Where Jesus said, “*Let not your hearts be troubled,*” the Spirit said through Paul, “*Sorrow not, even as others which have no hope...*” and, “*comfort one another with these words.*

Where Jesus said, “*I will come*

*again and receive you unto myself;*” the Spirit through Paul said, “*The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout... 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.*” Where Jesus said, “*Where I am, there ye may be also,*” the Spirit through Paul said, “*...and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*”

This is not the first time Jesus spoke like this, but he was not speaking words of comfort when he said to the Pharisees, “*I know whence I came,*

*and whither I go... for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me... I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come.... Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins*” (John 8:14-24). Now, in John 14, he was talking with his disciples and comforting them. Leading up to the words of John 14 Jesus said, “*Little children, yet a little while I am*

with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come... Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards" (John 13:33-36). It is evident that Jesus left his disciples to go to his Father above, and that through him, we also will go to the Father. "Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:5-6). Then he said plainly, "I go unto my Father" (John 14:12), and "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father" (John 14:27-28). Jesus was going back to the place from whence he came, back to his Father who sent him, to a place "above," a place that is "not of this world," and he said to his disciples, "Whither I go...thou shalt follow me afterwards."

The opening words of John 14 are in this context. They are not difficult. A teacher can present it to little children in four scenes with a flip chart. In scene one, Jesus is with a child and says, "Let not your heart be troubled." In scene two, he has left the child, and from another room he says, "I go to prepare a place for you." In scene three, he has returned to the child and says, "I will come again." In scene four, Jesus and the child are in the other room and Jesus says, "Where I am, there ye may be also." From childhood, we have known this holy Scripture; it is little wonder that the passage is so loved.

This simple passage is a problem passage for the advocates of a **renewed earth**. To sustain their theory they must deconstruct our Lord's words and put them back together upside down. Instead of Jesus saying, "I go to prepare a place for you," they have Jesus saying in effect, "I go to prepare you to be a place for me." Instead of Jesus saying, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself," they have Jesus saying in effect, "I will come again, and you shall receive me unto yourself." Instead of Jesus saying, "Where I am, there ye may be also," they have Jesus saying in effect

"Where you are, there I may be also." The difficulty of this reconstruction should give pause to those who advocate that Jesus will someday come and dwell forever with us on an eternal earth.

Renewed earth advocates direct our attention to John 14:23 where Jesus said, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." They tell us that the word translated "abode" in John 14:23 is the word translated "mansions" in John 14:2. (Of this, they are correct, and further, this is only two places in the Greek New Testament where this word appears in a noun form). Because of this, they say that we have it all wrong about following Jesus to the Father in heaven, because the Father will come to the earth to dwell with us. Their contention ignores the fact that words can be used in different ways in different contexts. There is nothing in John 14:23 to prevent Jesus from preparing a place for us above; neither is there anything in the passage that would prevent God from abiding with us while we prepare for heaven.

The verb forms of the nouns translated "abode" and "mansions" are used repeatedly in the book of John as terms of relationship. Jesus said, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake" (John 14:10-11); "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever... for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:16-17). The idea of abiding in a relationship with God continues into the next chapter; "**Abide** in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it

shall be done unto you... As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: **continue** ye in my love. 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 15:4-10). Jesus did not turn what he had just said about following him to heaven on its head when he taught us about the relationship we can have with the Father as we prepare for heaven.

Here we should note the astute comments of Guy N. Woods on John 15:4 as found in his commentary on John, page 323, published by the Gospel Advocate Company. Woods said, "*Tempted as though we may be to understand the words, 'Abide in me, and I in you,' as saying, in effect, 'Abide in me and, in consequence, I will abide in you,' such is not its meaning; the statement is not a command and a promise, but a two-fold command: 'abide in me; see to it also that I abide in you' a relationship attainable only through imbibing his spirit and living wholly by his word.*" See again John 15:7, "*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you...*" God makes his abode with us when his words abide in us.

Soon to be published by Resource Publications will be a Truth For Today Commentary on John 13-21 written by David Lipe. (The Truth For Today Commentary on John 1-12 has just been released.) Lipe says of John 13:33, "*The disciples were given assurance that though they could not immediately go where Jesus was going, they would join him in the future.*" Of John 14:1-3 he says, "*He was going away to prepare a place in heaven for his disciples and would one day return for them... His departure was for the purpose of preparing a place for His disciples. He would eventually come to get them, in order that they might be where he was... The Father's house in this reference was not on earth, Jesus was speaking of heaven.*" In regards to the statement, "*If it were not so, I would have told you*" Lipe says, "*The meaning was clear: Heaven is just as Jesus described; He would not allow his disciples to be deceived by any false hopes or expectations.*" Concerning the Greek word translated "mansions" and "abode" (John 14:2-3 and John 14:23; King James Version), Lipe says, "*While in 14:3 the promise was that the disciples would dwell with Jesus in the future, here the prom-*

ise was that Jesus and the Father would dwell with the disciples in the present."

We should also note A. T. Robertson's comments on John 14:1-3 in his Word Pictures in the New Testament, Volume V, pages 248-249, published by Baker Book House. Robertson said, "Christ's picture of heaven here is the most precious one that we possess. It is our heavenly home with the Father and with Jesus... Jesus is our Fore-runner (*prodromos*) in heaven (Heb.

6:20)." Where Jesus said in John 14:3, "*I will receive you unto myself;*" Robertson said of the word translated "receive," that it is the "*future middle of paralambano.* Literally, 'And I shall take you along (para-) to my own home' (cf. 13:36)." John 13:36 is where Jesus said to Peter, "*Whether I go, thou canst not follow me now: but thou shalt follow me afterwards.*" Robertson concludes, "*This is heaven for the believer to be where Jesus is and with him forever.*"

As Jesus promised Peter (John 13:36), we will follow Jesus to the Father, and the Father is in heaven, therefore when Jesus comes again to receive us unto himself, we will follow him to his Father in heaven. So "*let not your heart be troubled...*" (John 14:1), and "*...comfort one another with these words*" (1 Thess. 4:18).

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## How To Pick A Preacher...

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how to be *temperate in all things*. Titus was to teach the aged men to be temperate (Titus 2:2). The bishop was to be temperate in all things (Titus 1:8). It isn't necessary in this article to deal with every area wherein temperance is to be practiced but we must know that temperance is a part of the beautiful cluster described in the Bible as the fruit of the spirit of God (Gal. 5:23).

I was assigned the subject of temperance to be discussed during a lectureship. I will never forget the feeling of self-condemnation which became a part of my life as I prepared by lecture and studied the Bible, which I held across my fat belly. My clothes were getting too small and my breathing was out of control. I could do a fairly good job preaching to the brethren and sisters about what they should and should not do. They needed to practice self-control but did I not need to do the same?

A lengthy spell of illness has helped me to practice temperance and self-control which is a real problem, but such is my duty as a Christian. The food which I relish so much must be rejected and I can do it. I am doing it.

One occasion was a Gospel Meeting and the other was a home-coming service when I was invited to return and speak where I had formerly preached. On both occasions a bountiful lunch had been prepared by the good sisters. When the closing "amen" was said, people moved out into the area when lunch was being served. At both of those congregations I tried to act as if I had a bit of manners and stood

greeting the people as they moved out of the auditorium. At one of the congregations, a good lady who had been the wife of a deceased elder came and asked me to come along to lunch. When she and I entered the lunch room I saw the local preacher all bent over a plate filled with food and shoveling it in somewhat like a hog eating out of a trough. The two occasions mentioned above were almost identical. To surmise that I wanted special treatment is sheer nonsense. One thing which is sickening, nauseating and downright disgusting is to see preachers who have no manners or self-control and who feel justified in ignoring those Scriptures which tell us to be temperate. It doesn't take much sense for a normal human to learn a few decent manners and if such are not learned, please spare me the thrill of having to be around such people.

In picking a preacher, let me refuse the temptation to *lobby for my close friend and demand that all the others kow-tow to my whims.* There is no kind of politics as dirty as church politics. If you have not seen this, live a little longer. Diotrephes will pay a visit by and by (3 John 9). One dear sister described her husband by saying, "All he does is attend a business meeting and run off his mouth." She hit the nail on the head. Self-willed people can be a pain in the neck.

There are some other characteristics which I deem to be important in picking a preacher but I do not have time to write an entire book on this. Pity the people who have picked the wrong preacher! Getting rid of the wrong preacher can be like getting rid of the seven-year itch. There will usually be a lot of clawing and scratching — which God hates (Prov. 6:16).

I believe if I was engaged in picking

a preacher, it would be of tremendous value to pick one that could also be "*unpicked*" if need be. Some preachers just do not blend. The mix isn't right. Why rip a congregation to pieces over purely personal desires? I shudder to think of the sorry mess which has developed over picking the wrong preacher. The same is true in trying to change preachers, in some places.

If I picked a preacher I would earnestly pray for one who was *constrained to preach the Gospel.* I mean the preacher like Paul who had some deep convictions about preaching! The dear brother with all his trials declared, "*woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel*" (1 Cor. 9:16).

The phone rang and the brother who called wanted to know if I knew of a place needing a preacher. He said he used to preach but quit and went into secular work but he just couldn't make a living in secular jobs so he decided he would try preaching again. Well, er, ugh, I don't know about no church who needs that kind of preacher. I like the man who can say — "woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!"

Incidentally, no congregation has invited me to pick a preacher for the group and I am not anticipating that any will. It sounds fairly cranky I know, but if I should ever be saddled with the awesome task of picking a preacher, I would really want to view two places. I would want to look at the *seat of his britches* to see how slick his pants were (from sitting around), and I would also want to look at the *soles of his shoes* to see how thin they were from moving about. I read somewhere about "making full proof of thy ministry." This did not say, "make a fool of thy ministry."

*Plumbline, Dec / 1998*

# THE BONES OF JOSEPH

Roger Campbell

In the closing section of the book of Genesis, we read a fascinating statement that Joseph (the son of Jacob) made to his brothers. He talked with them about what would happen to his bones, that is, what he wanted them to do with his body after his passing. Here are the words of Genesis 50:24-26: “*And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence. So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.*”

What lessons can we learn from the Bible’s message about Joseph’s bones?

Joseph’s statement about his bones reminds us of the **certainty of death for all**. Joseph was a mighty man, second in command in the land of Egypt, yet, he, too, made the transition from “I die” to “Joseph died” (Gen. 50:24,26), leaving his bones behind. Except for those who will still be alive when Jesus comes again, all humans die (Heb. 9:27) and their bones are left in the hands of others.

Joseph showed **faith in God’s promise to visit Israel** (Gen. 50:25). It is not speculation on our part to state that in this regard Joseph demonstrated faith. You see, the Bible says, “*By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones*” (Heb. 11:22).

Joseph was totally convinced about these matters: 1) The God of heaven is *faithful*, being true to His word at all times (1 Cor. 1:9). 2) The God of heaven has the *power* to fulfill His promises (Ezek 12:25). 3) The God of heaven had promised Joseph’s father, grandfather, and great-grandfather that He would give the land of Canaan to their descendants (Gen. 12:5,7). 4) Since God is faithful and has the power to fulfill His promises, if He pledged to give a land to Jacob’s offspring (Israelites), then that is exactly what would take place (Josh. 21:45; 23:14). Thus, Joseph basically said, “When God comes to visit His people and make good on His prom-

ise, my bones are going with you.” Now that is buying into what Jehovah says and taking action!

Joseph’s bones lying in that coffin in Egypt sent a powerful message to the enslaved Israelites. Every time they thought about, talked about, or had occasion to pass by the bones of Joseph, they would be reminded of Joseph’s statements about his bones and that the God of heaven, according to His will and time schedule, would fulfill His promise to bring them to the distant land of Canaan. In the same way, when we reflect on our Lord’s promise of an eternal inheritance, we are reminded of the spiritual land of Canaan to which we are headed. When life seems tough, even unfair, and the road seems so long, let us remember our final destination!

What actually transpired with Joseph’s bones after he died? It is common for people to make requests about their funeral and what they would like to be done with their body following their demise. In some cases, the survivors follow those wishes; in other instances, they disregard them and do as they please. What happened with Joseph’s bones? The children of Israel complied with his request. A few hundred years after Joseph’s passing when the Lord delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, “*Moses took the bones of Joseph with him*” (Exodus 13:19). Joseph’s bones were transported from place to place as Israel wandered in the wilderness for forty years. Finally, after the Israelites

conquered Canaan, “*The bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel had brought up out of Egypt, they buried at Shechem, in the plot of ground which Jacob had bought*” and belonged to the land (territory) of Joseph’s offspring (Joshua 24:32).

Some people go to great lengths to make arrangements for their bones, but they do not do the same with their soul. Joseph did both. That is, he expressed his desires about what he wanted others to do with his physical body, but he also made it his priority in life to walk with the Lord and thereby make proper arrangements for his soul’s eternal well-being.

“*What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul*” (Mark 8:36)? In the same way, what shall it profit a man if his bones are buried or cremated in a memorable fashion, but he loses his own soul? Right-thinking people are those who set their mind “*on things above, not on things on the earth*” (Col. 3:2). Their number one focus is on eternity in heaven (1 Peter 1:3-4), not a cemetery plot or fancy funeral.

Like Joseph, we might have a say where our bones will be placed, but the Lord will make the final decision about our soul’s destiny. When you think about it, we choose our own eternal destiny by the choices we make in life. The Lord simply will be the One who pronounces the final verdict.

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# DESTROYING THE BOOK OF GOD

Marvin L. Weir

The Holy Book of God, like the people of God, has suffered persecution throughout the ages. James Smith was right on target in describing the treatment the Bible has received down through the stream of time. He says: “It has been tortured and ruptured, pierced and ridiculed, burned and buried, but it has quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, stopped the mouths of lions, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Here we see Jehoiachin burning it, but

God gave it a resurrection in a mightier form.”

The incident regarding Jehoiachin is found in the 36th chapter of Jeremiah. Let us study this chapter, and learn more about the message of God.

**The Message Given!** It is of no profit to men spiritually to heed just any message. This message comes from God, and is thus set apart from all other messages. To Jeremiah, God said, “*Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken*

*unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day” (Jer. 36:2).*

God has never relinquished control of His creation. This message was against Israel, Judah, and all the nations. God is not a pawn to be toyed with and pushed wherever man desires to push Him. Neither can God’s message be ignored without calamitous consequences. This message was a solemn warning!

The message of God was delivered in mercy. God says, “*It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin*” (36:3). This message stressed God’s love for His people, and His desire for His people to return to Him and save their souls.

The Gospel, the “whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:20,27), has been made available unto all men today (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3; Jude 3). All men are amenable to the Gospel, and none will be saved who refuse God’s warnings to obey and live as new creatures in Christ (Heb. 5:8-9; 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 John 1:7; 2 John 9-11). God “would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). It seems, however, that the majority of people are determined that “...they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

**The Message Heard!** The king is privileged to hear the message from God. The Scripture says, “*And they went in to the king into the court, but they laid up the roll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe, and told all the words in the ears of the king. So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll: and he took it out of Elishama the scribe’s chamber. And Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king*” (Jer. 36:20-21). The king receives a serious warning from God tempered with mercy. The importance of hearing and heeding the word of God is clearly seen in this incident. What will king Jehoiachin do? It was the most critical moment in his life.

What will people do today who hear the message of God? Will they give heed and act upon what they have heard, or

will they seek to discredit and destroy God’s Word? The faithful today fear that far too many will react as did Israel of old, “*Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits: Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us*” (Isa. 30:10-11).

**The Message Rejected!** The king now had to choose to either obey or reject God’s message. The Scriptures say, “*And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth*” (Jer. 36:23). Any fool can do as did this king. It is no wonder that God warns as He does about having “*an evil heart of unbelief*” (Heb. 3:12)! The “leaves” of the book were not the king’s problem. His problem was with the God of the Book!

The faithful mouthpiece of God or the paper upon which God’s Word is recorded may be “cut to pieces” or “burned up”—but not so with the divine message! Peter declares, “*For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever...*” (1 Peter 1:24-25). Many today would never cut out pages of the Bible and burn them, but they steadfastly refuse to heed the words they read!

**The Message Renewed!** “*Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words*” (Jer. 36:32). No man is through with God’s Word when he refuses to heed it and has sought to destroy it. God will not compromise His demands, and His Word will not go away (Matt. 24:35). The unbelief of people will not make God’s message of none effect.

Hear well the words of the Savior: “*He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day*” (John 12:48). Man only destroys his eternal soul when he attempts to destroy the almighty Word of God!

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## How Do You Read The Bible?

- Do you read simply out of **curiosity**, not really looking for Truth?
- Do you read with a **critical mind**, thinking that it really doesn't matter anyway?
- Do you read with a **closed mind**, thinking that you already know enough?

## How Should One Read The Bible?

- We should read **carefully**, remembering that it is the inspired Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21).
- To read **candidly** with an open mind, free from prejudice (Acts 17:11) is essential to understanding the Bible.
- **Constant** readers we must be. Plan our time with the "book" and do not let other things interfere (Psa. 1:1-2).
- As we read we must be **committed** to the Truth that we learn to the extent that whatever that "Truth" is, it is going to be a part of our life.

*Jerry Joseph*

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