



Seek The Old Paths

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

Vol. 34, No. 11

November 2023

ISRAEL IS AT WAR, AGAIN

By Gary McDade

Since Israel declared its independence as a nation in 1948, sixteen wars have been fought to retain its status as a nation. They are:

- The War of Independence (1947 -1949)
- Sinai War (1956)
- Six-Day War (1967)
- War of Attrition (1967-1970)
- Yom Kippur War (1973)
- Operation Litani (1978)
- First Lebanon War (1982-1985)
- Security Zone Campaign (1985-2000)
- First Intifada (1987-1993)
- Second Intifada (2000-2005)
- Second Lebanon War (2006)
- Operation Cast Lead (2008-2009)
- Operation Pillar of Defense (2012)
- Operation Protective Edge (2014)
- 2021 Israel-Palestine Crisis (2021)
- Israel-Hamas War (2023).

The last 8 of these wars (Lebanon was an interlude) have been with Hamas.

Charlatan opportunists from very near the beginning of Israel's independence have written millions of books capitalizing on Israel's misery and duping gullible people into believing they have special insights into Israel's future. Virtually all of them are premillennialists. Well-known names among them are: John F. Walvoord, Hal Lindsay, Tim LaHaye, John Hagee, and David Jeremiah.

The Bible proves all these men to be charlatans. And, here's why:

- (1) Israel lost its favored nation status when Israel crucified Christ (Matthew 21:28-46).
- (2) Jesus knew He would be rejected by the Jews (Isaiah 53:1-12).
- (3) Jesus kingdom, the church, was never intended to be a physical, material kingdom, but a spiritual one (John 18:36).
- (4) Jesus' kingdom is His church (Matthew 16:18-19;

Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 12:28; Revelation 1:9).

(5) The church was planned by God from eternity past (Ephesians 3:10-11).

(6) The church of Christ today is the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16).

(7) Today all Christians — not just Jews by physical descent — are referred to as Jews by an inspired apostle (Romans 2:28-29).

(8) All Israel will be saved by the same means as all Gentiles will be saved and that is by the new covenant which contains the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Romans 11:1-36, esp. vv. 27-28; Hebrews 8:6-13; Romans 1:16; 6:1-18).

(9) No signs forecast the second coming of Christ (Matthew 16:27; 24:36-44; John 5:28-29; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; 2 Peter 3:10-12; Revelation 1:7).

Any one of these 9 biblical proofs sustain the conviction that all of these modern prognosticators are frauds. Together they forge an unassailable case against these charlatans. Their efforts are skillfully designed to divert attention away from the Great Commission of Christ (Mark 16:15-16) and the church of Christ (Romans 16:16) into which the Son of God has been adding all the saved since the day the Lord's church was established in Jerusalem, Israel in A.D. 33 (Acts 2:47).

The real problem Israel confronts today is the same problem Israel confronted in the first century. Paul wrote, *“Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God”* (Romans 10:1-3).

“And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.”

Galatians 6:16.

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Editorial...

REBAPTIZED

Garland M. Robinson

Does the Bible say anything about being rebaptized? It's always good to ask questions. The Bible has the answer and it's to the Bible we must go to find God's answer. Men have their own answers but they are not God's answers. The Bible is our infallible guide. What does the Bible say?

The short answer to your question is that there is no difference between (1) someone who has not been baptized and (2) someone who was baptized but was taught wrong and then was baptized. There must be a proper understanding of what:

1) **baptism is** (immersion in water, Acts 8:38)

2) **baptism does**

- a. puts you into Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27)
- b. washes your sins away by the blood of Jesus (Acts 22:16; Eph. 1:7)
- c. saves you (Mark 16:16; 2 Peter 3:21)
- d. makes you a member of the Lord's church (1 Cor. 12:13)

The answer to the question of rebaptism begins by looking at what the Bible says about baptism.

Water baptism was taught by John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1-6; Mark 1:1-8; Luke 3:1-9; John 1:1-18). He was the forerunner to Christ to soften the hearts of the Jews so they would be receptive to Christ when he came (Matthew 3:1-3; see also Luke 3:3). John's baptism was for the remission (forgiveness) of sins — Mark 1:4, "*John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the **baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.***"

Jesus taught the same as John — baptism for the remission of sins. John 4:1, "*...**Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,** (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples.)*" Verse 2 points out that Jesus did not baptize with his own hands. It was his disciples who actually did the baptizing. This is a significant point. It was to make sure that no one

would be able to say that "Jesus" baptized them and that makes them special and more important than those who were not baptized by Jesus.

Jesus gave the command to his disciples to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to everyone. Since all have sinned (Rom. 2:10,23), all need forgiveness. Jesus said to his apostles, "*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 command to be baptized has been passed down to every generation. Matthew 28:20 says that when the Gospel is preached, those who have become Christians (by being baptized) are to teach others what they have been taught. Those who have been converted are taught to "*observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you....*" This same process repeats itself to every generation.

In the book of First Corinthians, we learn there was division in the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:11). Some were boasting that Paul had baptized them, others boasted that Apollos baptized them, some said that Cephas (Peter) baptized them. They were bragging on who baptized them, thinking that made them better than others (v.12). Paul showed them that Christ is not divided, that Paul was not crucified for them, nor were they baptized in the name of Paul (v.13). This prompted Paul to say he was glad he had not baptized (with his own hands) any more than he did (vs. 14-17). He did not want to be the object of confusion and division. Division is sinful (1 Cor. 1:10).

Paul's point was to show that it makes no difference who baptizes you. What does make a difference is that sinners believe in Jesus as the savior (John 4:42; 8:24), repent of their sins (Luke 13:3,5; Acts 17:30), confess faith in Christ (Matt. 10:32-33; Rom. 10:9-10), and then are baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of their sins (Acts

2:38; Rom. 6:4). That action makes one a Christian and a member of his church.

In Acts 2, the Gospel of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection was preached for the first time. Thousands were in Jerusalem on this occasion because of the annual celebration of Pentecost. In verses 23-24 Peter preaches to those gathered and reveals that they had crucified Jesus, but God had raised him up. Then in verse 36 we read: "*Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, **Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost***" (vs.37-38). This same practice of repenting and being baptized continues throughout the book of Acts and will continue till the end of time.

In Acts 8:5 we learn that "*Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.*" In verse 12 we read that "*when they believed Philip preaching the **things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.***"

Notice that "*preaching Jesus*" (v.5) involved preaching "*the kingdom*" (v.12). The kingdom is the church — the church is the kingdom. The words *kingdom* and *church* are used interchangeably in Matthew 16:18-19. Jesus said, "*...I will build my **church**... And I will give unto thee the keys of the **kingdom of heaven**....*" The point is this, preaching Jesus involves preaching his kingdom — the church, his body (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). There is only one body (Eph. 4:4). Jesus has only one church.

Here's the summation of the things above:

1) John the Baptist taught and practiced baptism for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4).

2) Jesus taught and practiced baptism for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; John 4:1).

3) Jesus commanded that baptism be taught and practiced as long as the world stands (Matt. 28:18-20).

4) The apostles taught and prac-

ticed baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

5) Philip taught and practiced baptism for the remission of sins. He also taught about the Lord's true church — the church of Christ, not a church founded by a man. Having that knowledge, many were baptized and became members of the church of Christ.

6) Paul pointed out that the one who baptizes you does not make you more important or special above others (1 Cor. 1:12-16).

For one to be baptized according to the Scriptures, there are things we must understand:

1) The **PURPOSE** of baptism:

a. For the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38).

b. It saves (1 Peter 3:21).

c. Puts you INTO Christ where salvation is (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27; 2 Tim. 2:10).

d. You are added by the Lord to his body/church, the body of the saved, the church that wears his name, the church of Christ (Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 12:13).

2) The **MODE** of baptism — immersion in water (Acts 8:38-39; Col. 2:12). Denominationalism teaches and practices sprinkling and pouring as acceptable modes of being baptized. Though there are Greek words for both sprinkling and pouring, they are never used concerning baptism. The Greek word used for baptism is specific: immerse, submerge, dip, overwhelm.

3) We are being “born again” to live a new life in Christ (John 3:3-5; 2 Cor. 5:17). Romans 6:4 says one is raised up out of the water “to walk a newness of life.”

4) We cannot continue in a church/denomination started by man. You are now a child of God and must be a “member of” and “worship in” the church that Jesus purchased with his blood (Rom. 16:16). The church that wears his name — the church of Christ.

5) Baptism is for those who know what they are doing and the purpose for which they are doing it. Small children do not comprehend baptism's significance.

If you are *taught wrong*, you cannot be *baptized right* because you don't have the knowledge of what is right. There are those who have been “baptized” but their baptism was not valid. They did not have an understanding

of baptism or they were baptized into a church founded by man. Their baptism is not valid. It's counted as though they had never been baptized.

In Acts 19:1-7 there is a divine example of some who were “**rebaptized**” because their previous baptism was not valid (even though it was for the forgiveness of sins). These twelve men had been taught and baptized according to John the Baptist's baptism (v.3). They were baptized “after” John's baptism was no longer in force. At the time they were baptized they only knew John's baptism which said “*that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus*” (v.4). But at the time they were taught and baptized Jesus had already come. He had already died on the cross. He had already been raised from the dead. John's baptism had fulfilled its purpose years earlier and had ceased by the time the Gospel was preached in Acts 2. Acts 19 occurred many years after Acts 2.

Before ascending back into heaven Jesus told the 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*” (Matt. 28:19-20). “*So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God*” (Mark 16:19).

The baptism Jesus commanded the apostles to teach and practice until the end of the world is the baptism Peter preached for the first time on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. On that day many were “*were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.*”

In order for baptism to be valid, there are several things we must **KNOW**:

1) We have sinned (Rom. 3:10,23).

2) Sin separates us from God (Isa. 5:1-2).

3) If we die in our sins we can't go to heaven (John 8:21).

4) We must obey the Gospel to be saved from our sins (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

5) Jesus only saves those who obey him (Heb. 5:9; Matt. 7:21).

6) I must know that by being baptized the Lord adds me to his church (Acts 2:47; 8:12).

There are several things we must **DO** in order to receive forgiveness of our sins and become a member of the Lord's church:

1) We must **hear** the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ (John 6:44-45; Acts 3:23). We have to hear “words” that can save our soul (Acts 11:14; James 1:21).

2) We must **believe** the Gospel (good news) and its teaching that **Jesus is the Christ the Son of God**, the savior of the world (John 8:24; Heb. 11:6; Acts 4:12).

3) We must **repent** of our sins. That means we change our mind and turn away from sin (Luke 13:3,5; Acts 2:38; 17:30).

4) We must **confess** faith in Jesus the Christ as the Son of God and savior of the world (Rom. 10:9-10; Matt. 10:32-33; Acts 8:37).

5) We must be **baptized** in water for the forgiveness of our sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16).

6) We must **continue to live faithful** to the Lord by obeying the Scriptures the rest of our life (1 Cor. 15:58; Rev. 2:10; Heb. 10:26).

The twelve men in Acts 19:1-7 had been baptized under John's baptism which was to look for Jesus to come. They did not know he had already come. They were sincere when they were baptized, but they had been taught wrong. That made their baptism wrong. When they learned the truth (v.5), they eagerly were rebaptized according to the baptism Peter preached on Pentecost.

It was not possible that they could continue “as they were” now that they had learned the truth. That would not work. They had to be rebaptized according to the baptism of the great commission (Mark 16:16). They did not hesitate to be baptized for the right reason and purpose.

CHANGING THE WAY OF GOD

Randy Kea

God's way is different than man's way.

God's way is right. It is never wrong.

God through the Old Testament prophet Isaiah makes the following declaration to his people: *“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord”* (Isa. 55:7-8).

Man does not think like God thinks. The only way man can know what God thinks about a matter is if God reveals His will. God has revealed His will in the pages of the Bible. Therefore, man can know the Divine will on all essential matters (Deut. 29:29; 1 Cor. 2:9-13; Amos 3:7; Eph. 3:3-5).

THINGS THAT WILL NOT CHANGE

1. **The Nature of God.** *“The prophet said, For I am the Lord, I change not”* (Malachi 3:6). The Psalmist says, *“but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end”* (102:27) There is no *“shadow of turning”* with God (James 1:17).

2. **The Desire of Jesus to Save.** Jesus *“tasted death for every man”* (Heb. 2:9) and *“gave himself a ransom for all”* (1 Tim. 2:6). He invites all to be saved (Matt 11:28-30).

3. **Our Needs will Never Change.** Man needs salvation from sin (Rom. 3:23); guidance (Jer. 10:23); purpose (Eccl. 12:13-14); hope (Rom. 8:24).

4. **God's Word does not change.** God's word was given by the direct revelation and inspiration of the Holy Spirit through Bible writers and has been providentially preserved in the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 Peter 1:24-25). This holy and divine production does not allow for *additions, subtractions, or alterations* of any kind (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:5-6; Rev. 22:18-19). One day we will be judged by the standard of God's word. Those who tamper with it will perish

under the curse (John 12:48; Gal. 1:6-9).

5. **Man's accountability has not changed** (Ezek. 18:20; Rom. 14:12; 2:6).

GOD'S WAY TODAY IS THE NEW TESTAMENT

Today we live and serve under the authority of the New Testament. Jesus is the author and mediator of this new covenant (Heb. 1:1-3; 9:15-17; 13:20). The details of the Old Testament are no longer binding (Col. 2:14-16; Eph. 2:14-16; Gal. 3:19-28). People need to see this distinction and “rightly divide” God's word (2 Tim. 2:15).

MAN HAS CHANGED GOD'S WAY THROUGHOUT TIME

1. **Cain** changed the sacrifice that he was to offer God (Gen. 4:1-7; Heb. 11:4).

2. **Nadab and Abihu** changed the kind of fire they were to use (Lev. 10:1-3).

3. **Moses** changed God's instructions from *“speak ye unto the rock”* to *“he smote the rock”* (Num. 20:1-12).

4. **Saul** changed God's revealed plan for offering sacrifices (1 Sam. 13:1-14).

5. **Saul** again changed God's instructions to suit himself (1 Sam. 15).

6. **Jeroboam** changed the system of worship and service that God had revealed to His people through Moses (1 Kings 12:26-33).

7. The **Pharisees and scribes** were told by Jesus they had changed God's law by *“making the word of God of none effect through your tradition”* (Mark 7:13).

Note: In each of these examples, God rejected those who rejected His revealed way. Severe consequences came upon those who changed God's way.

8. **Catholicism** has changed (and keeps changing) God's way in the New Testament. Such as: auricular confession, the Pope, purgatory, etc.).

9. **Denominationalism** has changed God's way. Every essential feature of the New Testament church has been altered and changed in some way. **Worship:** instrumental music, choirs, women preachers, etc. **Organization:** one pastor, conferences, synods, etc. **New Testament worship:** the name and organization have been changed to please the desires of men. **Man-made names** are substituted for divine designations. Even the simple **Gospel plan of salvation** has been perverted (Phil. 1:1; John 4:24; Rom. 16:16; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38).

10. Now, even those within the Lord's church are (and have been for a good while) pushing to change God's revealed way for the church. Drama groups, handclapping, females taking authoritative and leading roles over men, choirs, solos, children's church, dedicating babies, open fellowship with denominations and even God's law on marriage-divorce-and-remarriage are just some of the ways many are changing the Lord's church into something unknown in the Scriptures.

THE AUTHORITY ISSUE AND CHANGE

Proper respect for the authority of God's word (the Bible) would stop the unscriptural changes taking place today in the Lord's church. The ones causing “trouble” today in the body of Christ are those introducing practices that have no *New Testament authority whatsoever* (Gal. 1:6-9). Have you ever heard a false teacher ask the basic question, “Where is the Bible authority for doing this?” If they were asking this question, there would be no basis for the changes they are advocating! We must have Bible authority for what we believe, preach, and practice in order to please God (John 12:48; Col. 3:17; Matt. 15:9; 2 John 9-11).

THINGS THAT SHOULD BE CHANGED

We have considered the fact that God has always had a revealed way

for man. We have noted that man has always attempted to change that way. However, there are some things that need to be changed today as always.

A **closed mind** on our part needs to be changed. *“For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them”* (Matt. 13:15).

We should always have an honest and good heart (Luke 8:15).

A **heart of unbelief** needs to be changed to obedient faith (Rom. 1:5; Heb. 5:9) by examining all the evidence that God has provided us for His existence, the deity of Christ, and the inspiration of the Bible. This evidence is cumulative, compelling, and conclusive, so much so that man is *“without excuse”* (Rom. 1:20).

Our **stubborn will** should be changed. Jesus said, *“and you will not*

come to me that ye might have life” (John 5:40).

We should continue in on-going spiritual growth and development (2 Peter 1:5-11; 3:18). That is God’s way. *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord”* (1 Cor. 15:58).

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THE HORRORS OF HELL

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Some lament the fact that hell is not preached as often as the preachers of old times declared it. We’ve heard it said by some that Jesus spoke more on the subject of hell than he did on heaven. “Fire and brimstone” sermons moved some people to repentance and obedience to the Gospel. Others were scared away from Satan and his minions as if hell was too hard to imbibe (swallow). Back in the mid-twentieth century, the churches of Christ were known for their growth, yet today new converts are few and far between. Could it be we have lost confidence in the subject of hell to motivate lost souls to repent and be converted? Jude says it is appropriate to use fear in order to save some. *“Others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh”* (Jude 23).

John the Baptizer describes hell as the place where the fire is never quenched (Luke 3:17). Contrary to the Jehovah’s Witness sect, accurate translations of the Bible proclaim hell does exist. It is as real as heaven. Just as heaven’s blissfulness is difficult to state in human terms, so it is that the horror of hell is next to impossible to put into words. Please allow me to make a feeble attempt.

During three and a half decades of working in various positions at a coal-fired power plant, I was exposed to the results of a controlled fire that produced steam. That in turn rotated the turbines, which resulted in spinning the generators to produce electricity. Periodically, the boilers had to have maintenance that required entering

inside vast air ducts where the aftermath of burned coal could be seen. One of my first trips into that sulfurous wasteland was never forgotten. Somewhere, off in the distance, was a sound of metal rubbing against metal making an eerie, reverberating moan, over and over, like someone in pain or torment and suffering. One of my coworkers said nonchalantly that’s probably what hell sounds like. I suppose that environment held other likenesses of hell as well. For instance, by sight, all that was visible was different shades of gray and black — rust and corrosion of metal, completely void of color. Imagine a place with no color. One of the joys of life is the colorful Zinnias in my garden. The smell in that dungeon left an impressionable memory as well. Coal ash leaves an acidic stench and sting in the nostrils. No kind of fragrance like roses could be found. Absolutely no moisture within that arid place, not the first drop. Remember the rich man’s futile desire to have one drop of water touch his tongue (Luke 16:24)? The likeness to a desert of dry grit made up that tormenting environment.

Occasionally, the horrible thought of being accidentally locked inside was alleviated by exiting through a small manhole. Yet, there will be no exiting the eternal place of torment for the lost (Luke 16:26). The sound of that closing door will be Jesus himself saying *“depart from me”* (Matt. 7:23).

In another compartment of the boiler known as the superheater, I could squeeze between the rows of tubing just far enough to peer over and down into the deep dark abyss of

the bottom of the boiler several stories down. Falling over that precipice would mean certain death.

If all this is combined with constant pain, I suppose this scenario gets us closer to just how bad hell really is. And, if one seems to have comfort in loved ones being there alongside you, remember all human emotions of love and compassion are gone. Only disdain, contempt, regret, sadness, weeping, gnashing of teeth, and torment exists in the place called Gehenna (Matt. 13:42).

I shall never forget my twelve-year-old son crying to me and stating “Dad, I don’t want to go to hell.” Immediately, my thought was where did he get that fear of hell. It had to be hearing or reading about it — perhaps, the parochial school he had attended since the beginning of his elementary school years. Somewhere, somehow he was impressed by the knowledge of the torment in eternal hell. Because of his desire to please both of his parents, he would attend the Catholic Church with his mother one Sunday and accompany me to the church of Christ the next, alternating each week until he obeyed the Gospel in the Spring of 1985. Despite twelve years of indoctrination in that apostate church, fearfulness of this real and eternal place called hell helped to cause my young son to face eternity with hope.

Fearing the flames of hell works to the saving of souls. Let’s shout it from the housetops.

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TWO PATHS WHICH LEAD TO TWO ETERNAL DESTINIES

Roger D. Campbell

As part of the Lord’s amazing “Sermon on the Mount,” the Master declared, “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matt. 7:13-14). In these verses, we read about two gates, two ways, two groups of people, and two eternal destinations/destinies.

If you and I are familiar with those words of Jesus, that is *great*. If we accept the truthfulness of them, that is *better*. If we are applying their teaching in our own lives and declaring them (along with the principles and specific Bible teaching which are connected with them) to others, that is *even better*. After all, at the end of the day/life, of what benefit is it to me personally if I acknowledge the truth but fail to use it properly in my own life?

Jesus’ message about paths, gates, and destinies involves a choice, and that choice is ours to make. What does our Lord want each one of us to do? His message is clear, but does our desire match His? He implores mankind to enter by the strait/narrow gate (Matt. 7:13). If He calls on us to take that action, then it is possible to do it, correct? We are reminded that Jesus also said we must strive to enter through the narrow gate (Luke 13:24). To “strive” means to put forth great effort, even when difficulties are faced.

Let us compare the **two ways**. One way is *broad*. It is, as we say, the path of least resistance. It is the way of doing your own thing, going along with the crowd, or focusing on the here-and-now aspects of life. The broad way leads to a wide gate. There is a better choice, though, and that is taking the *difficult* path which leads to a narrow gate. One who decides to travel this path will not find it easy to stay committed to it. It is one thing to *begin* going down this path, but it is an entirely different matter to *stick with it* until the end of life. One who travels the difficult path will face resistance along the way. Come what may, he is required by the Lord to

sacrifice himself, forsake all for Jesus’ sake (Luke 14:33), and keep his focus on the spiritual and eternal. Such a life is not for little children!

Let us compare the **two eternal destinies**. According to the Christ, one path leads to *destruction*. That would be what He later called “everlasting punishment” (Matt. 25:46). It will be eternal destruction (separation) from God (2 Thess. 1:9). The other way/path sounds much better! It leads to *life*, which the Bible calls “eternal life” (Matt. 25:46). And, the only way to have such wonderful, never-ending life is through Jesus. In God’s arrangement, there is no third alternative: there is eternal *life* and there is eternal *destruction*, period!

Let us compare **how many people are taking the two paths**. The Master said that “many” are traveling the path to *destruction* (Matt. 7:13). Such a declaration is heart-wrenching for those who genuinely love the souls of men. The reality of many humans living out of harmony with the Creator’s will does not shock us, though, as we reflect on the widespread, yes, universal rebellion against God in the days of Noah when only eight people were spared destruction (Gen. 6:5; 1 Peter 3:20).

What about the number of people who are taking the path that leads to *life eternal*? The Christ said, “*few there be that find it*” (Matt. 7:14). In these matters, did Jesus speak accurately? Of course He did! Never did He or the Holy Spirit-guided biblical writers tell us exactly how many folks will be lost or what percentage of people will be saved eternally. The contrast, however, grabs our attention: *many* to destruction, *few* to life.

The only thing that can keep us out of heaven is sin — *our own* personal sin. Why will so many be lost when they leave this world? There are multiple correct answers to that question, but from the context of what we have been examining in Matthew 7:13-14, here are four matters to consider:

- 1) Some live for self and think of self above others rather than apply “the Golden Rule” (Matt. 7:12).
- 2) False prophets lead people astray and devour them (Matt. 7:15).
- 3) Some are involved in religious activities, but do not submit to the Father’s will (Matt. 7:21-23).
- 4) Some make the unwise choice to disregard what Jesus says and build their life on sand (Matt. 7:24-27).

Friend, the choice is ours. Will we make the wise decision to submit to the will of the Lord so we can live with Him eternally? Let each one of us make this resolution in our heart: “Regardless of what any other human might do or say, I want to live for the Lord and follow the path that leads to heaven.”

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Contributions	\$5,700.00
Debits	
Postage.....	\$2,444.51
Supplies.....	\$606.16
Ending Balance.....	\$23,489.02

“IT IS WRITTEN”

Because of the richness and precise inflection of the Greek language and the profound uniqueness of the Bible, the New Testament writers could pack an immense spiritual wallop into a single word.

The verb *gegraptai* is an excellent example of this. In technical terms this word is in the *perfect tense*, the *passive voice*, and the *indicative mood*. Its root word is *grapho*, which means “to write.” Our English words “graph, graphic, graphite” are derived from this verb.

As used in the Greek language, the *perfect tense* indicates a *completed action with a resulting state of being*. This final state of being is the culmination of a process. The English language has no tense that adequately corresponds to it. However, the following sentence serves as an excellent illustration of the sense of the *perfect tense*: “my mother had a baby.” The live birth of a child describes a completed action (conception, pregnancy, delivery) that has a continuing result (I have a new brother or sister).

The *passive voice* emphasizes the *finality of the action of the verb*, and the *indicative mood* emphasizes the *reality or factuality of this final state*.

The process which resulted in the written Scriptures begins with revelation — the unveiling or uncovering

of the unknowable mind of God. “*Who hath known the mind of God?*” is the question the apostle Paul quotes in Romans 11:34. It is a rhetorical question because no eye has seen nor ear heard the mind of God. For anyone to know the will of God, it must be revealed by God.

Because the process of supernatural revelation lasted about 1,500 years, it cannot be overemphasized that it was the Holy Spirit of God Who inspired holy men to produce the Holy Scriptures. As it is used in 2 Timothy 3:16, the word “inspiration” (God-breathed) denotes the fact that the very words of the Bible have been divinely chosen to communicate accurately, precisely, and completely the mind of God.

Jesus’ made reference (Matt. 5:18) to every *jot* (or *yod*, the smallest Hebrew letter) and *tittle* (or the smallest pen mark in forming a Hebrew letter — like dotting the letter i). Jesus’ reasoning with the Sadducees was based upon the tense of a verb in Matthew 22:32 (“I am”); and the apostle Paul’s focus on Moses’ use of a singular noun (seed) instead of a plural one in proving his point in Galatians 3:16, all demonstrate the verbal inspiration of the Bible.

During the process of inspired revelation, God’s spokesmen were endowed with the ability to miraculously

confirm the divine origin of their words. When the apostles went out and preached everywhere, Mark records that the Lord was working with them and confirming their words through the accompanying signs/miracles (Mark 16:20). The confirmation of God’s revelation is compared to the temporary scaffolding of a permanent building in First Corinthians 13 and the certification of an official document in Galatians 1. This imagery is quite helpful in accurately understanding miraculous gifts. When a building is finished, the scaffolding is taken down; the certification of a marriage happens once for all time. Once God’s Word was confirmed, miracles ceased.

The result of this process of inspired revelation is a final, complete, certified, ever-relevant, flawless, all-sufficient, authoritative product called the Holy Scriptures. Like Jesus who was completely human and completely deity, the Scriptures have been written by human penmen, yet divinely flawless; the Scriptures are the perfect law of liberty (James 1:25).

Thus, “it is written” has the same force as “thus saith the Lord.” With *gegraptai*, you, literally, have God’s word on it in writing.

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THE TRUTH ABOUT SO-CALLED “SAFE SIN”

Marvin L. Weir

“If you continue to preach and teach quoting all those Scriptures, the younger generation simply will not stand for it, and this congregation will have to close its doors.”

The belief that certain sins are to be expected and will not endanger one’s soul is afflicting both those within and without the Lord’s church.

According to my handwritten notes, I believe the two quotes that follow are from the pen of Mike Jackson. He says:

I like coming up with oxymorons. These are expressions or statements which are apparently self-contradictory but make a point nonetheless. Some examples are: ‘cruel kindness,’ ‘heavy lightness.’ And some on the lighter note include:

‘clean dirt,’ and ‘tough love.’ As a rule these words just don’t go together.

Well, today I shall add another one to the list — “safe sin.” Please let me explain. These are “good” sins (another oxymoron), acceptable sins — sins that are laughed about! If put to a vote, these would be removed from the list of sins altogether.

It is obvious the world in which we live would like nothing better than to vote certain “sins” out of the realm of sinfulness! Our government evidently decided long ago that it would become the expert on sin, and now it informs

us about the so-called “*social ills*” of society. The psychologists and sociologists have influenced most folks more than the Bible; thus, sin has now become a *disorder*, a *disease*, a *fault* of one’s own heredity, etc. Never mind that the inspired Word of God says in 1 John 3:4 that sin is a “*transgression of the law*” — “*lawlessness*” (ASV) ! It does not matter to most people that they simply ignore the fact that the Bible declares “*the wages of sin is death*” (Rom. 6:23). And, since some one or some thing can always be conveniently blamed for one’s acts and condition, it would be unthinkable to think that “*the soul that sinneth, it shall die*” (Ezek. 18:20).

According to worldly wisdom regarding human behavior, changes must continually occur in the way folks think and act. It would be a total surprise to many subscribers of this false philosophy to learn that the Bible states, “*for ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven*” (Psa. 119:89). In other words, sin has **always** been just that, sin — and **always** will be! Nothing that man can do or say will change this Biblical truth. On the great Day of Judgment every soul will be reminded that Christ compassionately warned, “*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).

The world has indeed “done a number” on most people’s thinking. How many people do you know who simply smile upon hearing a filthy joke? What about one eagerly listening to another tell of their sinful encounter? How often do you hear of someone referring to a person’s sinful action as “cute?” Or, one may exclaim, “It’s just the way that boys/girls are today.” Another person boldly declares, “We are living in 2023, not the 1930s or 40s.” Someone else says, “Society has changed,” as if such an explanation makes sin acceptable today. Even those who profess to be members of the Lord’s church have told this writer, “If you continue to preach and teach quoting all those Scriptures the younger generation simply will not stand for it, and this congregation will have to close its doors.” The wisdom of the world would have one believe that the passage of time changes everything, and that God’s Word is just not relevant today. Such is the devil’s lie. There is no truth in what Satan says (John 8:44). God never changes (Malachi 3:6), and His words/truths will never “*pass away*” (Mark 13:31).

From the beginning of time, sin has been the problem of man (Gen. 3:1-19, 22-24). It is sin that separates one from God. Isaiah recorded, “*Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear*” (Isa. 59:1-2). Sin will never change into righteousness and neither will the truth that “sin separates one from God” change! People who commit sins this world has deemed to be “normal” and “acceptable behavior,” “glamorous and exciting,” will one day learn “*that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God*” (Gal. 5:21).

Listen carefully: no matter what one chooses to believe, there is **no** such thing as “safe sin!” The high price of sin is the devil’s best-kept secret! Sin is **always** costly, but the devil will attempt to disguise the high price that one will pay for sinful living. The price of living in sin is the loss of one’s soul (Rom. 6:23). Yes, one can **live in sin!** The apostle Paul notes, “*Mortify [put to death] 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: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them” (Col. 3:5-7).

These words of the Savior will torment the minds of the lost throughout eternity: “*For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul*” (Matt. 16:26)?

One will do well to never forget that God’s word is true (John 17:17). God’s Word also “*abideth for ever*” (1 Peter 1:25). Jesus Christ, the One who came to *save the world* (Luke 19:10), will at His next coming *judge the world* (Rom. 2:16). At that great day, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess, “*Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*” (Phil. 2:10-11). Let us purpose to glorify God and save our souls!

Keep in mind there is no “safe sin.” All will not one day be accountable to worldly wisdom, but all will “*give account to him that is ready to judge the living and the dead*” (1 Peter 4:5).

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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: 2132 Old McMinnville Hwy, Woodbury, TN 37190.

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