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Finally, brethren

**WHATEVER
THINGS**

are true

are noble

are just

are pure

are lovely

are of good report

IF THERE IS ANY VIRTURE AND IF THERE IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY –
meditate on these things.

PHILIPPIANS
4:8

You can download this month's Meditate On These Things as a PDF file by clicking [here](#). Also, an archive of past MOTT issues is available at christistheway.com.

"God chastens in proportion to His love, in the Day of grace. He punishes, in proportion to the grace and love despised and trampled upon without repentance in eternity" (Albert Barnes, **Notes on the Bible**. Comments on Amos 3:2. e-Sword computer Bible program).

Question about Darwinian Evolution from Sri Lanka

Question

Dear sir,

This is a frequently asked famous Bible question. Non Christians always debating about this matter even in Sri Lanka. It is Darwinism.

I studied Biology for advance level examination. When we are studying Biology we have to learn Darwinism and bio chemical evolutionism. Bio chemical evolutionism was introduced by Alexander Oparin and J.B.S. Haldane. According to the Holy Bible, we know the God created the earth. But they were neglected that matter.

Personally, I believe the Bible in my deep heart. Some amazing things and animals on the earth, show us that they are not a result of evolutionism.

Sunday school teachings also learned us the inapposite side of Darwinism. But I like to ask your explanation about this, sir. Thank you.

Answer

Here is my reply to Darwinian evolution. For a more in-depth reply, I suggest you consult the website www.bible.ca and click on the little dinosaur icon.

Sincerely,
Keith Sharp

Is There a God?

Keith Sharp

In 1986 a famous visitor made a brief tour of the inner solar system. A luminous body with a long, faint tail hurried on its journey around the sun and returned to the recesses of space. The British astronomer Edmond Halley observed this phenomenon in 1682 and, based on the times of similar sightings in the past, correctly predicted it would return in 1758. He was quite correct, and this body, which circles the sun about every seventy-five years in its highly elongated orbit, became known as Halley's comet. In the eighteenth century astronomers worked out a complex formula, based on Newton's theory of gravity, to accurately predict the orbits of comets.

So, what's the point? The Hebrew king and poet David asserted that the universe itself declares the glory of God. "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And the firmament is declaring the work of His hands" (Psalm 19:1).

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that the existence and predictable operation of the physical universe, comets included, will lead an honest, intelligent inquirer to believe in the existence of God.

It Is a Matter of Faith

The scientific method of study, called the "empirical method," is observation and experimentation. For something to be truly a matter of science, it must be measurably observed and the event must be repeatable under the same essential circumstances at different times and places. If scientists cannot "see" something happen and set up a situation (experiment) at another time and place so that the same thing happens again, it is not a scientific matter.

For example, who was the first European to discover the Americas? This question is historical, not scientific. We cannot observe the discovery of America, nor can we experimentally repeat it. Scientific evidence, such as that gained by archaeologists, may be studied, but essentially the inquiry is historical rather than scientific.

The God revealed in the Bible is spirit (John 4:24) and has no material existence (Luke 24:39). He is invisible to man (I Timothy 6:16). God cannot be put into a test tube. I cannot demonstrate by observation and experimentation that God exists, but neither can the atheist prove He does not. To do so, the atheist would have to be able to observe all portions of the universe at the same time in both the material and spiritual realm. In other words, to prove by observation that there is no God, one would have to be God. The existence of God is not a question of science but of faith.

This does not mean it is unreasonable to believe in God. "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1, **New American Standard Bible**). The word "conviction" is translated "evidence" by the **New King James Version**. "Faith" is conviction about something we do not see based on evidence.

I believe that Christopher Columbus saw one of the islands of the West Indies on October 12, 1492. I did not and cannot see this happen, and I cannot repeat this in an experiment. But my faith rests on clear, compelling historical evidence. It is a reasonable faith. I believe the same is true of my faith in God.

First Argument

Please consider with me three principles of natural science that provide powerful, logical evidence for our faith in the existence of God.

Law of Causality

The first principle of science is the Law of Causality (Buffaloe 6). In essence, it states there must be an adequate cause for every effect. This principle is the basis of scientific inquiry. Natural science deals with the material universe and correctly looks for natural causes to natural events. Scientists properly attribute an earthquake to the movement of tectonic plates. Whether the hand of God is behind it is not their business as scientists.

But natural causes can only explain so much. Eventually, one is forced back to the uncaused First Cause. It is the ageless question, "Which came first, the chicken or the egg?" The backward chain of events must come to rest somewhere.

First Law of Thermodynamics

Perhaps the most basic principle of physics is The First Law of Thermodynamics. This law "states that energy can neither be created nor destroyed but can be changed in form" (Buffaloe 76). High school chemistry students learn to balance chemical equations. Everything that goes into the chemical process must be accounted for in the product. Nothing comes out of a chemical process that was not put into it, and whatever is put into the process comes out in one form or another.

The First Law precludes the reasonable possibility that energy came into being by natural causes; since, in the natural world, "energy can neither be created nor destroyed."

Second Law of Thermodynamics

This important principle of physics

holds that energy tends to dissipate itself ... In other words, the second law relates energy changes in a system to the organization of that system. Placed in this context, it states that there is an increase in entropy (disorder or randomness) - that is, a decrease in organization. Since useful energy is organized energy, an increase in entropy means a decrease in useful energy (Buffaloe 77).

According to the Second Law, usable energy in a closed system tends to decrease. Things tend to disorder, not to order. As we drive our cars down the highway, we don't stop to let gasoline (the energy source) out; rather, we must stop to put more in. The usable energy is converted to motion and heat.

Think!

Now, please think with me. Either the material universe does exist, or it does not. Of course, to be rational, we must accept its real existence. Otherwise, there is no such thing as science, the study of the material universe; and our senses, upon which we depend to gain all accurate information, are totally untrustworthy.

Further, either the physical universe has always existed, or it had a beginning. The cosmos has an immeasurably huge amount of usable energy. Our sun, one small star among numberless stars that compose the Milky Way galaxy, itself one of myriads of galaxies, converts 4,700,000 tons of its own mass into radiant energy each second (**Britannica Macropaedia**. 17:808). If the universe were infinitely old, all usable energy would have dissipated in the infinite past. Thus, the cosmos had a beginning.

Atheists once looked to matter and energy as the uncaused first causes. Recent research in nuclear physics has further revealed the very essence of matter. Physicists now describe energy particles which compose electrons, protons, and neutrons; which, in turn, are the components of the atom. In other words, behind all matter is energy. Before there was matter, there was energy. The only prime mover atheists can propose is mindless energy.

The question, then, is Is mindless energy an adequate first cause? Either energy is the uncaused first cause; or there must be a supernatural, i.e., outside and above the realm of the natural, uncaused first cause. But, since energy cannot be infinitely old (Second Law, i.e., entropy), energy cannot be the uncaused first cause. Therefore, we must look for a supernatural origin of the universe.

As our Explorer satellites ranged deeper into space, past Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and their systems, and finally out of the solar system into the unfathomable recesses of the abyss beyond, pictures of incredible varieties of chemical and physical forms hitherto unimagined were sent back to earth. Yet in all this infinite variety is found order. The basic laws of physics and chemistry which have been found operable in our experience on earth apply as well in these remote worlds. The Law of Gravity applies precisely the same on Uranus as it does on Earth. Our universe has amazing order in incomprehensible complexity.

How does one explain such order in diversity? Energy is the only answer available to the atheist. The universe as a whole must be viewed as a closed system, and energy in a closed system tends to disorder, not order (Second Law). Thus, again we are forced to look for a supernatural beginning of the cosmos.

Law of Biogenesis

One of the basic principles of biology is The Law of Biogenesis: "Thus far, life seems to come only from prior life in an unbroken chain, at least under conditions that prevail at present on earth" (Buffaloe 114). The fact is, there is no credible evidence that life can possibly come from nonlife under any conditions, and the evidence is against the existence in ancient times of the imagined conditions under which life might supposedly have evolved by natural means. The consistent result of hundreds of years of experimentation about the origin of life has been and continues to be that life comes only from prior life.

Think!

Either life exists on the earth, or it does not. Again, to be rational, we accept the existence of life on Earth.

Further, either life has always existed on earth, or it had a beginning. Since life and the earth are parts of the universe, which had to have a beginning, life had to have begun here sometime.

Finally, either life came from natural causes or supernatural.

The consistent experience of science is that life does not naturally arise from nonlife, nor has any experiment ever been conducted under any conditions, which demonstrates that it can. Thus, if we are reasonable, we must accept a supernatural origin of life on earth.

What Kind of Supernatural First Cause?

In Romans chapter one the apostle Paul shows why the Gentiles needed the gospel. They had rejected the knowledge of God and were inexcusable for so doing.

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse (Romans 1:20).

We should mentally see (understand) what is behind those things we see physically. There must be an adequate cause (Law of Causality) for the existence of the universe.

What do we understand when we see the material universe? There must be incomprehensible power behind such an awesome expanse, infinite intelligence to bring order to such endless variety, and will to accomplish purpose. There must be eternal existence to qualify as the uncaused First Cause. The attributes of intelligence and will show this Cause to be a Person, i.e., a Being possessing personality. Having eternal existence and infinite power and intelligence, this Person must be supernatural. The Bible calls this Person, who has eternal self-existence, infinite power and intelligence, and will, God.

Conclusion

Imagine, if you will, a print shop containing many reams of paper, gallons of ink, and thousands of sets of type reproducing over and over the twenty-six letters of the alphabet and the numbers zero through nine. Due to a gas leak, one great explosion occurs in this shop. Ink, paper, and type are hurled randomly and violently in all directions. When the dust settles, the smoke clears, and all components come to rest, the result is all thirty volumes of the **Encyclopaedia Britannica** in perfect order with no misspelling. Incredible?

And yet atheists demand we believe that the universe, infinite in size and complexity, incredibly orderly in function, composed of over one hundred chemical elements in virtually limitless combinations, is the result of a “Big Bang” produced by mindless energy aeons ago. My mind is not capable of such childish, irrational faith.

Incontrovertibly, the existence and predictable operation of the physical universe, in all its parts, will lead an honest, intelligent inquirer to believe in the existence of God. Indeed, “The heavens are telling of the glory of God.”

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A Triune God - True or False?

Jefferson David Tant | Roswell, Georgia, USA

There is a debate among some as to whether God exists in three persons—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—or in just one person. Among the prominent denominations claiming there is just one person are Jehovah’s Witnesses. They believe that Christ is not divine, but he is actually Michael, the archangel, and that the Holy Spirit is just a “wind,” the breath issuing from the mouth of God.

There are many passages that support the existence of God in three persons, and it is our purpose to examine the teaching of the Bible.

The Scripture begins with the familiar “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters” (Genesis 1:1-2).

So, what was this “Spirit of God?” Was it just the Father’s breath as he was speaking? Various translations use “fluttering” or “hovering,” but most use “moved” or “moving.” One translation reads “...a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.”

The word “God” in the Hebrew is “*Elohyim*,” a plural noun. It is the plural of “*Eloah*”—“a deity or the Deity:-- God” (**Strong’s Hebrew Dictionary**). That is one clue, since a plural noun obviously refers to more than just one.

But what was this Spirit of God? “And the Spirit <*ruwach*> of God <*eloahym*> moved <*rachaph*> upon the face of the waters.” The Hebrew word “*ruwach*” can mean either a wind or a spirit. So, can we determine its

meaning in this passage? The following verb helps to shed some light on the question.

The verb *“rachaph”* (moved) is used only three times in the Old Testament. Its next usage is in Deuteronomy 32:11: “As an eagle stirs up her nest, flutters *<rachaph>* over her young, spreads abroad her wings, takes them, bears them on her wings...” Strong defines the word: “a primitive root; to brood; by implication, to be relaxed:--flutter...”

The word expresses great care, love and affection as the mother eagle provides for her offspring and bears them up on her wings. Now, a “wind” cannot express the tender affection of a mother’s love. It just blows and is indifferent and impassionate. Thus the Spirit of God in Genesis lovingly “flutters” over His creation.

In the New Testament, there are references to the Holy Spirit having a separate identity and personality. Jesus told the 12:

“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you”
(John 14:16-17).

Christ identifies the Holy Spirit as an entity, and refers to him as “He,” not a wind or a breath or an it.

The baptism of Jesus provides another clue.

“After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased’” (Matthew 3:16-17).

If, as some claim, there is only one person in the God-head, there is a problem with deception here. The passage suggests three personalities—the voice in the heavens, the dove descending, and the person of Christ. Was Christ a ventriloquist? Did he project his voice into the heavens, and then conjure up a dove? Christ was not a stage magician, amazing audiences with sleight of hand illusions.

Another passage to consider is from the pen of the apostle John.

“This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement” (1 John 5:6-8).

Christ’s Sonship was established at his baptism in water, as the voice from heaven said “This is my beloved Son...” Christ also came by blood, as he shed his blood for the sins of the world. Various Old Testament prophets had written about the death of the Promised One (Isaiah 53:7, 12, Daniel 9:26, etc.).

What part does the Holy Spirit have in this testimony? We have the written word, that which gives us the testimony, through the Holy Spirit’s inspiration. Christ had promised that the Holy Spirit would be sent to reveal all truth, and Paul wrote:

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words” (1 Corinthians 2:12-13).

One further passage to illustrate the point. In giving the Great Commission, Christ told the disciples to “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 18:19). It wouldn’t make good sense if the translators had it read, “baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and God’s Breath.”

Just for Today...

Pat Farish | Lancaster, Texas, USA

"Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

These words, Ephesians 4:32, are familiar; they call us, in few words, to kindness -- we should be kind to one another. Now, what is difficult about that? Then, why aren't we doing it?

Someone said that it takes so many muscles to smile, and so many more to frown, so common sense says we should be smiling more. Along the same lines, it takes more out of us to be unkind, than to be kind – then why not realign our thinking, to react to more circumstances kindly? It doesn't hurt a bit. And, we are obeying God, in the process.

Second, we should be tender-hearted. I have never (that I know of), eaten a heart, whether of cattle or whatever. We understand that the "heart" of our passage is not that pump in the middle of our chests; but the illustration is good, nonetheless. One of the requirements on us is that we be "forbearing": abstaining from the enforcement of a right. So, we are "tenderhearted" in our dealings: if someone does something not necessarily sinful which nonetheless he should not have done, instead of "hard-hearted" reaction, our compassionate spirit governs our response.

Finally, forgiving one another. Responding to a bad situation, one said "well I'll forgive but I won't forget!" One of the problems of the attitude exposed there is that we are to forgive as God forgives, He who removes our transgressions "as far as the east is from the west" (Psalm 103:12). We rejoice in His forgiveness, and we should also forgive, without the implication of later vengeance.

Be kind, tender hearted, and forgiving.

Is Islam Compatible With Christianity? No. 9

Tommy G. Thornhill | Etna, Arkansas, USA

This failure to read and study the Bible has resulted in a lot of people calling themselves Christians simply because they profess to believe in God, Christ, and the Bible, but they do not follow the Lord's commandments and instructions on how to become a Christian nor how to properly live the Christian life. They simply adopt and wear the name without really understanding what it means. They do not know true Christianity.

Because of this widespread unbelief, ignorance, and indifference among nominal Christians for true Christian values, some have formed an unholy alliance with Muslims termed "Chrislam." This movement seeks to unite so called Christians who profess to believe in God, Christ, and the Bible with Muslims who believe in Allah, Mohammed, and the Qur'an. But this cannot be as we shall see. Muslims believe that Islam as revealed in the Qur'an (Koran) should be the universal theocratic religion of the world. So they seek to supplant every other religion. Muslims realized years ago that they would not be able to conquer the Western countries militarily and politically, but because of indifference the people would allow themselves to be infiltrated and perhaps conquered through "freedom of religion." We can see this happening at the present time all over Europe and America.

Even though the majority of people in the Western countries still profess a belief in God and Jesus Christ, they have very little knowledge and conviction about what they believe or why. They don't even practice what they profess. They "have a form (fluff without substance) of godliness but deny its power (ability)" (2 Timothy 3:5). It hasn't changed their lives or their conduct. They do not allow God's word to transform and motivate them to practice Christianity. As Paul put it, "they profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient and disqualified for every good work" (Titus 1:16). Muslims use this

lack of conviction and tolerance under the guise of “freedom of religion,” to make great gains among the peoples of the Western world. They know that people who possess such little conviction of faith that they do not practice it can be easily persuaded to accept almost anything that pretends a semblance of religious belief in a higher being. So, Muslims tolerate compromise until they gain the dominance.

But Jesus left no room for compromise. With Him it is an either or choice, one or the other, it cannot be both. He said, “He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad” (Matthew 12:30). Paul clearly condemned any compromise between true Christianity and any false religion, and this includes Islam, when he wrote:

“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?” (2 Corinthians 6:14-16)

Because of people’s tendency to act like sheep (easily led) they blindly follow any shepherd who comes along. By so doing they compromise their faith. Jesus said His sheep will not listen to the voice of a stranger. They will flee from him (John 10:4-5). But if people choose to blindly follow wicked leaders who are themselves blinded from the truth (2 Corinthians 4:3-4), both the blind leaders and those who follow them will end up in the ditch (lost in hell) (Matthew 15:14).

Such movements as “Chrislam” have allowed Islam to make great inroads in America. Note the following quote from a few years ago in a Muslim paper.

“Islam will become the predominant religion, although it may not become the only religion. We expect differences to exist for as long as the earth exists. Only Allah will settle the matter... Although it is said that Christians are still in the majority I do not believe it. They will have to prove it to me. Right here in America we do not have a majority of Christians, we have a minority of Christians. Many are nominal Christians, just wearing the names they got from their foreparents, but they are not true Christians ... It is wonderful to know that we (Muslims) are the best religion and that we are in the majority” (“Bilalian News.” 4/1/77).

Do we not see his statement coming to pass at the present time?

His statement should wake up Christians to the necessity of living the proper life and setting the right example. If the spread of Islam is to be stopped it must be done by people who not only talk the talk, but walk the walk. Compromising the truth will not work. God said long ago through the prophet Amos, “Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?” (Amos 3:3). Islam and Chrislam do not agree with God, His Son, and His word, so how can they claim to walk with God? Think about this. Compromise never goes uphill. Compromised truth is always error.

Christians must fight Islam as they do any false religion. Islam is a religion that denies the true God, the divinity of Jesus Christ, and the inspiration of the Holy Bible. Any religion that denies the Deity of Christ and the inerrancy of the word of God cannot be of God. But, even if we prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus is truly God, manifested to man in the flesh, and the word of God is God’s final, completed revelation to us, it will not refute Islam or any other false religion if those who claim to believe it do not live the life. Don’t just say it, live it. Remember,

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

The Word "Christian"

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

The word “Christian” is only used three times in the Bible. We find it in Acts 11:26; 26:28; and also in 1

Peter 4:16. It is defined as “a Christian, a follower of Christ” (**Thayer’s Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament**. 672).

“A name given to the disciples or followers of Christ, first adopted at Antioch. It does not occur in the NT as a name commonly used by Christians themselves (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16). The believers first became known as Christians as an appellation of ridicule” (**The Complete Word Study Dictionary – New Testament**. 1483).

It seems to me, as you look at those three verses, the word is not used as an “appellation of ridicule” nor is it given in derision as some contend. Rather, it was a divinely given name which was worn by those who would become followers of Christ.

Notice with me three things I believe we can learn from the way the word “Christian” is used in these verses. Valuable lessons for each of us.

In Acts 11:26, we find that the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. If I am a Christian, then I am a disciple. Look at this definition of the word “disciple.” “*Mathetes* (disciple, JRM) means more in the NT than a mere pupil or learner. It is an adherent who accepts the instruction given to him and makes it his rule of conduct” (**The Complete Word Study Dictionary – New Testament**. 936). So then, the Christian is a disciple of Christ. He follows the Lord, adhering to the instructions given by Him, making the Bible his rule of conduct.

In Luke 14:25-35, three times the Lord uses the expression “cannot be My disciple” (verses 26, 27, 33). Unless one is willing to do certain things, it is impossible to be His pupil. The first statement is that one must hate father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters and even his own life to be His follower (verse 26). Matthew 10:37 is a good commentary on what the Lord means by hating one’s father, mother, etc. In our list of priorities Jesus must be first, ahead of everyone else. Then in verse 27, He says we have a cross to bear. Just as Jesus bore His cross, in a figurative sense we must bear ours as well. Such involves making any sacrifices necessary, bearing any shame or reproach, even crucifying self to be His disciple. There is a cost involved in serving the Lord (verses 28-32). If one is not willing to forsake all (verse 33), then he cannot be His disciple. Vincent says, “Christian discipleship is founded in self-renunciation” (**Word Studies in the New Testament**. 1:383).

Are you truly a Christian? If you are then you are a disciple. One who is willing to follow the Lord regardless of the cost involved.

Then in Acts 26:28, Agrippa tells Paul, after hearing his sermon, “You almost persuade me to become a Christian.” The gospel is God’s power to save man from his sin (Romans 1:16), yet it does not move everyone to obey. Regardless of how knowledgeable and effective the preacher or teacher may be, the truth will not penetrate the heart of some. The message delivered by Paul terrified Felix, but he still waited for a convenient season (Acts 24:25). Jesus told an audience that they had to eat His flesh and drink His blood, consume His word; they deemed that a hard saying with many of His disciples turning back walking no more with Him (John 6:53-66). The hymn entitled “Almost Persuaded” says, “Almost cannot avail; Almost is but to fail; sad, sad, that bitter wail – Almost – but Lost.”

Peter tells us if one suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name (1 Peter 4:16). Suffering is the lot of the child of God. Paul warned, “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). We may not be called upon to give our lives for the cause of Christ, yet if one stands for the truth, which means he will be in opposition to the sinful life-styles of the people of the world, persecution will follow. We may be mocked, ridiculed, lose our jobs, friendships severed, treated disrespectfully, etc. Yet when we stand for the truth, practice that truth, teach that truth, it brings honor and glory to the One who made it possible for us to be Christians. May we never be ashamed to live by and speak forth the word of God to a world living in darkness even if we are persecuted for such.

If we are Christians, then we are disciples, fully persuaded to love and serve our Lord who died for us,

never allowing persecution to cause us to be ashamed of the One who opened the gates of heaven so we could enter in.

Second Chance in Eternity?

Mike Thomas | Beaver Dam, Kentucky, USA

Jesus said we will either go to heaven or hell because of our choices in life (Matthew 25:45-46). If we do not make heaven, will we get a second chance in eternity to obey God and avoid hell? There are those who believe this idea is taught in 1 Peter 3:19, which says Jesus (through the Spirit) “went and preached to the spirits in prison.” The assumption is this preaching is done to convert those who are dead; namely, those in torments in Hades (Luke 16:23). But the context of Peter’s statement shows he was referring to the teaching opportunities the dead received while in life and not what is done for them in eternity. The “spirits in prison” were those “who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah” (verse 20). They were the people of Noah’s generation, whom God judged with the flood because “the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5). But it’s not like they did not have any prior warning to repent because Noah preached to his generation (2 Peter 2:5), as he was “divinely warned” (Hebrews 11:7). Thus, when Noah revealed what he received from the Spirit, it was Jesus’ way of preaching to that generation, who were spirits in Hades by the time of Peter’s writings. The implication is Jesus will eventually judge those He warns (John 12:48).

Those who are counting on a second chance after death to choose heaven are in for a sad awakening. The Bible gives no assurance of such a hope. Instead, it teaches that “it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). Not wanting anyone to perish, God is patiently giving men opportunities now to repent (2 Peter 3:9). He wants Christians to continually preach His word because He “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). The time to respond to His plan of salvation is now. After death, every person will give account for the “things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10). “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (6:2).

If you are not a Christian, God has patiently endured your sins so that you might respond to His word upon learning the truth. That may very well be this moment, in this article and similar efforts. His message to you is that He loves you (Romans 5:8) and wants you to be saved from the spiritual consequences of violating His will: sin (6:23). The only remedy for that is the blood of Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:14). And the only way to contact the salvation of that blood is through the gospel (Romans 1:16). “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3-4). Those who say we are saved apart from baptism are misleading people. True salvation occurs when we believe in Jesus as God’s Son (John 8:24), confess it before men (Romans 10:9-10), and are buried with Christ in baptism (Acts 2:38; 22:16). It is only then that we are in Christ (Galatians 3:27) and prepared for eternity. Any other hope is an empty promise.

The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil

Sean P. Cavender | Bald Knob, Arkansas, USA

After God had created the heavens and earth, filling his creation with life through vegetation, animals, and human beings, He stated that everything was “very good” (Genesis 1:1, 31). Everything Jehovah had created was perfect; it was completely and wholly good.

Yet the concept of a perfect and entirely good world is foreign to all of Adam and Eve’s children. We have only experienced and lived in a world that is filled with good things and evil things. As we grow older and

we experience more things, we begin to feel that the world is more unstable and unbalanced, favoring evil.

When God placed Adam in the garden that was in Eden, he told him to eat of any tree in the garden with the lone exception of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That tree is the stuff of legend and infamy. Imagine being Adam — experiencing perfection and fellowship with the Creator and Giver of life. He knew bliss and what was good. Why would he want to know what was evil? Yet we know that Adam and Eve both partook of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

The devil in his temptation was able to make the tree of knowledge of good and evil appear to be entirely good and innocent, while casting God in a negative light. That serpent of old “promised” that eating of the tree would make a person be like God (Genesis 3:1-5).

1. The tree of knowledge of good and evil was the introduction of sin and evil into this world. Sin carries with it the idea to “miss the mark,” or bulls eye. God’s command was broken. People love darkness and evil deeds (John 3:19). “This present evil world” (Galatians 1:4) has its roots at the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

2. The tree of knowledge of good and evil brought shame into a world that was shameless. Adam’s and Eve’s eyes were opened and they knew they were naked (Genesis 3:7, 11).

3. The tree of knowledge of good and evil was a tree of separation. Sin separates us from God (Isaiah 59:2), and it causes spiritual death (Ephesians 2:1). From that time on the world has needed a Savior, One who could save us from the evil, sin, and separation that we know. Through Jesus Christ we have the promise of eternal life (Romans 6:23).

The Real Tragedy

William J. Stewart | Kingston, Ontario, Canada

On August 20, 2016, Kingston hosted what was no doubt the largest concert in the city's history, and perhaps the biggest concert in Canadian history. The K-Rock Centre was filled to capacity, with some big names in attendance, including our Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau. An estimated 25,000+ also spilled out into the streets surrounding Springer Market Square, where a Jumbotron and massive speakers gave the outdoor crowd the feel of being part of the event taking place just a few blocks away. In addition to this, the event was live streamed to 400+ venues nationwide: arenas, theme parks, movie theatres, parking lots, restaurants, etc.. In fact, the event could be seen in any house in Canada with a TV or a computer, as it was made available on CBC TV and cbc.ca.

Unless you were camped out under a rock somewhere (or perhaps are are not a Canadian), you know what the event was. The Tragically Hip, a Canadian rock band from the Kingston area were playing their last concern. Whether you like the band or not, the circumstances are sad. Lead singer, Gord Downie, had been diagnosed with terminal brain cancer. It's nice the band has been able to play a farewell tour, both for themselves and their fans; but as I heard the concern that night, a real tragedy came to mind (NOTE, I wasn't at the concert - the sound of it carried approximately 5 km up the Cataraqui River to my backyard).

The real tragedy is that on a Saturday night, millions upon millions of people were celebrating Downie's life and career, but the next morning, the number of people who would gather to celebrate the life and person of Jesus Christ were far fewer.

The real tragedy is that some people traveled hundreds of miles to be at the concert, but most people are not willing to travel more than a few blocks to go to worship God.

The real tragedy is that people are intimately familiar with a musician's lyrics (not just the Hip, any entertainer), but few are even loosely familiar with the words of life.

The real tragedy is that people were wearing T-shirts that read **In Gord We Trust**, which is not just support

for a dying man, but idolatry (an intentional change to **In God We Trust**). In fact, a major Canadian paper ran the following headline the morning of the concert: **One Nation Under Gord**¹. It's idolatry, plain and simple.

I have nothing against the Tragically Hip. They are simply musicians making a living and celebrating their career. It is sad that Gord Downie is terminally ill. It is sad when anyone has an illness that threatens to cut this life short. But more tragic than the impending loss of a man whom many deem to be a national treasure, is the loss that so many will experience by entering into eternity without knowing and serving Jesus Christ. That's a tragedy that is not hip at all!

¹ [Globe & Mail](#)

Parables of the Master
Ready for His Return
(The Ten Virgins)

Matthew 24:1-13

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

The Lord taught the last three parables Matthew records to His disciples alone (Matthew 24:1) on Tuesday before He was crucified that Thursday (Matthew 26:1-2). As the Lord's last few days upon earth passed in turmoil and confrontation, He diligently prepared the disciples for events after His departure. After He had pronounced His final woes and condemnation upon the religious guides of the Jewish nation and upon the nation itself (Matthew chapter 23), He foretold the destruction of the Temple and the nation and gave His followers signs by which they could know when this was about to occur (Matthew 24:1-34). Then He urged upon them the necessity of being prepared for His eventual return (Matthew 24:35-51). Finally He spoke the parables that would encourage all His disciples to be ready for His return (Matthew chapter 25). The first is the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13).

In the context of the parable the Master repeatedly warns us we must be ready for His return, for we do not know when it will be. "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Matthew 24:36; cf. Mark 13:32). "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming" (Matthew 24:42). In fact, He warns us He is coming when we don't expect Him. "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Matthew 24:44). The point is "Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is" (Mark 13:33).

The Lord and His apostles repeatedly warn us to watch (Mark 13:33-37; 1 Corinthians 16:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:6; Revelation 3:3). This is not a command to gaze at the sky. To watch is to be ready, to be prepared. The command to watch is accompanied by the admonition to pray (Mark 13:33), to "stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13), to "be sober" (1 Thessalonians 5:6), and to "hold fast and repent" (Revelation 3:3).

It is not certain exactly what was involved in Jewish weddings in the first century. The father of the bride had to consent, and the groom had to give a dowry for his bride (Exodus 22:17; cf. 1 Corinthians 7:36). Marriage was certainly preceded by an engagement that was so binding it took a divorce to break it (Matthew 1:18-19). There was a wedding feast (John 2:1-2,9) at which festive garments were expected (Matthew 22:11-12), and the bride wore special attire (Jeremiah 2:32; Revelation 19:7-8; 21:2). The parable before us relates there was a time the groom came, it could vary, and at least these virgins (similar to bridesmaids?) were to be ready whenever he came, so they could participate in the festivities.

The virgins each took oil lamps and waited for the arrival of the groom. Due to the lengthy wait, they fell asleep. At midnight the cry was heard, "Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!" (Matthew 25:6) Panic time. As they trimmed their lamps, five of the maids realized they hadn't brought sufficient oil.

Such a foolish lack of preparation! They couldn't borrow from the wise virgins, else all ten would run short of oil. They had to go at midnight to find oil to buy. By the time they got back, the doors were closed to the party, and the groom wasn't letting in any more guests.

Being refused entrance to a wedding party might be temporarily devastating to a bridesmaid, but the lesson speaks to the horror of being shut out of the eternal kingdom when Christ returns because we were foolish and failed to make adequate preparation.

"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming" (Matthew 25:13). That is really the only point of the parable, but it is a terribly important lesson. Christ could return at any time. It will be too late then to prepare (2 Corinthians 5:10). Those who are not watching will be lost. Death could come at any moment, and there will be no second chance after that (Luke 16:26). How foolish not to be watching for the Lord's return. Are you prepared? Have you believed and obeyed the gospel? Are you living for the Master? Are you watching for His return?



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