

Hear The Shepherd's Voice

JUNE 2013

FREE



Volume 17 Issue 6 "A Christian Newspaper"

Understanding The Covenant of Grace

Message by: Leroy Surface

The following is an excerpt from Leroy Surface's message titled "Getting the Covenant Right" in which he delineates five criteria for understanding the covenant of grace.

1. Know Who Christ Is

To know who Christ is, is to know who He was before He was "made flesh" in the womb of Mary. It is a revelation from God that is most clearly revealed in the scriptures by the apostle John. In defining Christ we must be careful to say only what the scriptures of John and the other apostles say, because it is only in their writings that we will find the correct understanding. We must not look outside of the scriptures for our understanding of Christ, because no man, or any group of men, has any "private interpretation" beyond that which the apostles understood.

John 1:1-3: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." John begins by telling us about one, whom He calls "The Word," who existed "in the beginning" "with God" and "was God." Compare these first three verses in John's gospel (John 1:1-3) to the first three verses of the Bible.

Genesis 1:1-3: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." In these first three verses of the Bible, we find "God" in the first verse, "The Spirit of God" in the second verse, and "The Word of God (God said)" in the third verse. None of these had a beginning, because they were "in the beginning" with God, and they were God. They are contained in the first four words of the Bible, "In the beginning, God."

The apostle Paul tells us in **Hebrews 11:3**, "Through faith we understand that

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God has laid the problem at the doorsteps of the church

Message by: Kirbbie L. Cowart

Right after 9/11 Bro. Leroy Surface and I were setting in our office talking about what had just happen to America and he made this statement "If we don't see a revival in America with men and woman turning back to God with all their heart our grandchildren will be praying to Allah."

As I look at America today I can say we have not had the revival or the people of America turning back to God, to extent to stay the judgment of God. Yes America has been judge by God and the wrath is beginning to be poured out. You and I both have seen thing we would have never dream of happening to our beloved America but we are seeing it every day.

The voices have cried out for repentance from the church house to the court house. A county judge came by our church pleading with the people to repent and turn back to God, people in the Law enforcement have ask the church to repent. Why are they asking the church to repent because that where the judgment started. *For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? 1 Peter 4:17*

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. 2Ch_7:14

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the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." We know that God did **not** use "faith" to create the worlds, because "faith" is to simply "believe God." It is because we "believe God" that we understand that God "spoke the worlds into existence." When Paul tells us that the worlds were framed by "the word of God," he uses the Greek word "rhema," which means "an utterance." The worlds were framed by the "utterances of God." The first chapter of Genesis tells us what those "utterances" were that "framed" the earth when it was "without form and void."

Genesis 1:3: "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light."

Genesis 1:6: "And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters...."

Genesis 1:9: "And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so."

Genesis 1:11: "And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so."

Genesis 1:14: "And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night."

Genesis 1:20: "And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven."

Genesis 1:24: "And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so."

Genesis 1:26: "And God said, Let us make man in our image...."

What God "said" was only an utterance, but "when" God said, "The Word," which was "in the beginning with God" and who "was God" went forth "from God" to create all things. "All things were made by Him (The Word), and without Him was not was not anything made that was made" (John 1:3). When the apostle John speaks of "The Word" he uses the Greek words "Ho Logos," which is defined by Strong's Greek Dictionary as "The Divine Expression, i.e. Christ."

Isaiah 55:11-13: "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." There is no word in the Hebrew which is the equivalent of the Greek word "logos." Even so, this text in Isaiah is a promise of Christ, whom God would send into the world to "take away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The "new creation" is promised in the words, "instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree;" the "thorns" and the "briers" being the "sin" that entered into the heart and nature of man through Adam's transgression. Notice the two phrases, "It shall accomplish that which I please" (verse eleven), and "It shall be to the LORD for a name" (verse thirteen). "Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

Revelation 19:11-13: "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called THE WORD (the logos; the divine expression) of God." This text speaks of the second coming of Christ to this earth to "execute judgment" upon the ungodly (Jude 1:15). It speaks of Jesus, the "only begotten Son of God," but notice that He returns to earth in His eternal name; "His name is called 'The Word of God.'" This is He, who was "in the beginning with God" and, who "was God."

I John 5:7: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." These words written by the apostle John, who knew Jesus Christ better than any of the other disciples, give the simplest and best definition of the Godhead to be found in the scrip-

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of the church. The ideal of most preacher today is "I have to build me a big ministry because people will not believe I'm called of God if I don't have this "Big" ministry". God has great thing for me! "They say". What about Jeremiah ministry the nation did not repent at his preaching did that make him a less of a man of God.

Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.

Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.

Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Harken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken. Jeremiah 6:15-17

You and I have seen it people come into church armed up like man and wife living in adultery and proud of it. I was pastor of church one time and was there about a year before I found out my youth teacher was just living with a man that was not her husband I told her, she could not teach in this church anymore. I was the most awful preacher that they ever had. It was shock me that most of all the church still wanted this sweet teacher to teach their teenagers knowing she was not married to this man. If you start naming sin in most churches today you would empty it out that why they can't preach the gospel that will make men free from sin. The Bible said *His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Isa_56:10*

In 1990 I had my Gospel Tent up in Zavalla, Texas. God told me to go to the tent early that evening because a man was going to stop by and give me something. At about 6:00 pm I was there along when a man pull onto the lost I was setting on the platform reading my Bible, he got out of his car he went to the back open up the trunk of the car got out a large sign and came a gave it to me. He said God told him to give me this sign. I did not know the man and would not know him to day. It had printed on it **for the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? 1 Peter 4:17** I thought for a long time it may be more big television preachers falling, but I've come to learn it not about that, but its about the condition of the heart of men and women in the church and the message that is being preach in the church.

In closing let me say its not the worlds problem it's the church. God has laid the problem at the doorsteps of the church.

Will men and women get right with God before its to late?

Will families once again take there families to the house of worship and put the alter back in there homes and in their churches ? We must return to God with all of our heart!

All the flag waving and dancing in the church don't impress God one dit. Because he look at the HEART!



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tures.

Who is Christ? Christ is the eternal Word of God. He is as eternal as God is, because Christ is the one who was *“in the beginning with God”* and who *“was God.”* He was not created by God, because He was with God in the creation. Neither was He *“begotten”* by God because, as the *“Word of God,”* He was *eternally “with God,”* and He *“was God.”* Christ is the creator of all things, because, as John says, *“All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made”* (John 1:3).

2. Know What Christ Came to Do

The Bible never mentions *“The Christ”* by that name (title) until God sent the angel Gabriel with a message to the prophet Daniel. He told Daniel about one whom he called *“The Messiah (The Christ),”* who would come *“to finish the transgressions, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness”* (Daniel 9:24-27). This short prophecy (four verses) is the most significant promise in the entire Bible concerning the purpose of Christ's coming into the world. It was, of course, a prophecy of Jesus; but to correctly understand who Jesus is, we must first look back to the beginning to see who Christ is. There are many other prophecies in the scriptures that tell what Christ would be, and what He would do, but none of them identify Him as Christ. Isaiah foretold the sufferings, death, burial, and resurrection of one he called *“the servant”* in the **fifty third chapter of Isaiah**. It is only after the fact (of Calvary) that we understand that Isaiah spoke of The Christ. The same is true of the promise of a *“virgin”* who would give birth to *“Immanuel (God with us; Isaiah 7:14):”* the prophecy had to be fulfilled before it could be understood what was meant. The message of *“The Christ”* was such that God did not reveal it in a dream or vision to one of the prophets. Instead, He sent His angel (Gabriel) to tell Daniel about the coming Messiah (The Christ), and what He would be sent to do.

Daniel 9:24-25: *“Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks.”* This is the only prophecy in the Old Testament that gave the knowledge to the children of Israel of a specific person who would come at a specific time to do a specific thing. He would come exactly 483 years after King Artaxerxes of Persia gave a decree to *“restore and rebuild Jerusalem,”* which he gave in the year 457 B.C. He would be *“The Messiah (the anointed one, i.e. The Christ),”* whom God would send into the world to (1) *“finish the transgression,”* (2) *“make an end of sins,”* (3) *“make reconciliation for iniquity,”* and to (4) *“bring in everlasting righteousness.”* All of Israel was talking about the coming of *“The Christ”* in the same year that Jesus appeared at John's baptism, and was anointed by the Holy Ghost to begin His ministry. Not only were they looking for one called *“The Christ,”* but they were expecting Him the same year He appeared among them, and they knew what the angel Gabriel had told Daniel that He would do. John the Baptist introduced Jesus at the Jordan River as *“The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”* Word began to spread throughout Judea that *“The Christ”* had come. Andrew was the first of the twelve *“chosen disciples”* to recognize Him as such. He ran to his brother Peter, crying, *“We have found The Messiah, which is, being interpreted, The Christ”* (John 1:40-41). Next it was Philip, who went to Nathaniel, saying *“We have found Him...”* (John 1:45). Peter, when questioned by Jesus, answered, *“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God”* (Matthew 16:16). Martha, on the occasion just before Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, said to Him, *“I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world”* (John 11:27). All of these knew that He was *“come into the world”* to *“make an end of sins.”*

3. Know That Jesus is “The Christ”

I John 1:1: *“That which was from the beginning....”* The translators erred in the translation of the first two words of John's first Epistle. John was writing to tell us about a *“person,”* not a *“thing.”* The Greek word *“hos,”* which is the first word in this epistle, is better translated as *“who”* instead of *“that which.”* A very brief study of the Greek, which any one of us can do with a *“Strong's Concordance,”* will confirm that what John actually said in the introduction to his epistle is as follows:

I John 1:1-4: *“He who was from the beginning, whom we have heard, whom we have seen with our eyes, whom we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, who was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) He whom we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.”* The words, *“He who was from the beginning,”* speak of Christ, **who is “The Word,”** and in the Greek language, *“The Logos,”* which is *“the divine expression of God.”* Notice that He is called **“The Word,” “The Life,”** and **“That Eternal Life.”** Each of these speak of The Christ, who was *“with God, and was God”* for all eternity, past and future. When John speaks of *“whom we have heard, whom we have seen with our eyes, whom we have looked upon, and our hands have handled,”* he speaks of Jesus of Nazareth, whom John knew to be *“The Christ”* of eternity, the *“creator of all things.”*

I John 5:1: *“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.”* This is possibly the greatest truth of the entire gospel, but I offer it in this message as the third criteria of getting the covenant right, because it is impossible to believe that Jesus is *“The Christ,”* in a saving way, if you do not know who Christ is and what He came to do. Many, who *“profess Christ as their savior,”* are so superficial in their *“faith”* that they believe *“Christ”* is Jesus' last name. Others believe there are *“many Christ's.”* For these to believe that Jesus is Christ has no saving power whatsoever. Jesus is *“The Christ”* whom God sent into the world to *“make reconciliation for iniquity and to make an end of sins.”* Notice in the scriptures, the believer's confession of faith always speaks of *“The Christ,”* using the definite article to indicate that there is one and only one *“Christ.”* All of these knew the prophecy of **Daniel 9:24-27**, and each of them believed that Jesus was, and is, *“The Christ”* of that prophecy. Andrew told Peter just two days after the Holy Ghost came upon Jesus of Nazareth, *“We have found the Messiah (The Christ)”* (John 1:41). A few months later Peter would reply to Jesus' question of who they believed He was with these words, *“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God”* (Matthew 16:16). Martha told Jesus just before He raised Lazarus from the dead, *“I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world”* (John 11:27). The language indicates that each of these understood much about *“The Christ”* long before they ever heard of Jesus of Nazareth. Each of these had received the *“revelation of Jesus,”* that He is *“The Christ”* who was promised to come into the world.

When we understand that Jesus is *“The Christ”* of eternity who was *“made flesh”* (prepared a flesh and bone body; **Hebrews 10:5-10; Psalm 40:6-10**) so that He could *“dwell among us”* (John 1:14), many other prophecies come to light that tell us more clearly who Jesus, the son of Mary was and is, and what He was sent to the cross to do. In the same day that sin entered into the world through Adam's disobedience, God gave the promise of *“the seed of the woman”* who would *“bruise the head of the serpent”* (Genesis 3:15). Jesus is *“the seed of the woman.”* When God told Abraham to offer his son Isaac for a *“burnt offering”* (Genesis 22:2), Abraham told Isaac, *“God will provide himself a lamb...”* (Genesis 22:8). Jesus is *“The Lamb of God”* who was offered to *“take away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29). In **Isaiah 7:14** the prophet says, *“Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”* Jesus is *“the son of the virgin (Mary);”* He is *“Immanuel,”* which means *“God with us;”* He is *“The only begotten Son of God”* (John 3:16), which means He is the only one who was born a *“son of God”* from the womb of a woman. The prophet Isaiah gave promise that *“The Redeemer”* would *“come to Zion”* (Isaiah 59:20). Jesus is that redeemer.

John 1:14: *“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us....”* For all eternity before Jesus was born to Mary, Christ was the *“eternal Spirit”* (Hebrews 9:14), not having flesh and bones (Luke 24:39). The apostle Peter spoke of the *“Spirit of Christ”* that was in the prophets when it testified beforehand of *“the sufferings of Christ and the glory that would follow”* (I Peter 1:10-11). It was for the purpose of those *“sufferings”* that He was *“made flesh”* and dwelt among us.

In **Hebrews 10:5** the apostle Paul speaks of Christ when He was *“made flesh”* in the womb of Mary. *“Wherefore when He (Christ, the eternal Spirit) cometh into the world, he saith, ‘Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me...I come to do thy will, O God.’”* The *“flesh and blood body”* that was prepared in the womb of Mary is the Son of God.

Luke 1:35: *“And the angel answered and said unto her (Mary), The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called THE SON OF GOD.”*

Luke 2:11-12: *“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour,*

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WHICH IS CHRIST the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." The "incorruptible seed" (I Peter 1:23), which was planted in the womb of Mary, was "Christ, the Lord." That baby, which was born of Mary and laid in a manger, was "Christ, the Lord." He was "The Christ," who was "in the beginning with God," and "was God." He was the creator of all things; but that baby in the manger was not "in the beginning with God." We should understand it this way. The baby Jesus was The Christ. The baby did not "become Christ," because Christ is eternal. Instead, Christ became the baby Jesus. The angel Gabriel announced to the shepherds, the birth of "a savior, which is Christ the Lord." Gabriel had told Joseph, "She (Mary) shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21).

The baby Jesus was The Christ that was in the beginning with God; but, the baby Jesus was not "in the beginning with God." The baby Jesus was the Son of God, and the Son of God is The Christ. He did not become "The Christ," as some teach; instead, in the womb of Mary, Christ became the Son of God. The angel Gabriel had told Mary, "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Christ was in the beginning with God, but the Son was not in the beginning. I realize that many will believe this statement to be erroneous; but if you do, please show me by the scriptures that the Son of God was not "made of a woman, made under the Law" (Galatians 4:4).

It was by the will of God that Christ was "made flesh" and came to this earth as a man. That "man" was Jesus of Nazareth, who was also "the only begotten Son of God." It is important to understand the words of Paul in Galatians 4:4-5, "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." The "only begotten Son of God" was "begotten (born)" of a woman. Christ, who was "with God" and who "was God" in the beginning, is the incorruptible seed that became the Son of God in the womb of Mary.

Philippians 2:5-7: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being IN THE FORM OF GOD, thought it not robbery to be EQUAL WITH GOD: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." The apostle Paul reveals the same understanding as the apostle John concerning the eternal nature of Christ. Paul says He was "in the form of God," and "equal with God," but He "made Himself of no reputation...and was made in the likeness of men."

Matthew 16:15-17: "He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not REVEALED it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Peter received a revelation from God of who Jesus of Nazareth is; "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus confirmed to Peter that such knowledge is a "revelation from My Father." It is based upon this revelation of Jesus that the apostle John can tell us, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." This is not a superficial statement that John makes. He had served Jesus Christ for over sixty years when he wrote these words in his first epistle. Long before John met Jesus, however, he had some knowledge of "The Christ." This knowledge of Christ had been taught in the synagogues for almost five four hundred years before Jesus was born to Mary. This "knowledge of Christ" was also a "revelation from God," brought directly to the prophet Daniel. It is commonly referred to today, as "The Seventy Weeks Prophecy." In these words from God, sent directly to Daniel by the angel Gabriel, was the promise that before seventy weeks of years (490 years) would pass, six things would be accomplished, all in the last "week (the last seven years)" of the prophecy. At the beginning of the seventieth week, one called "The Messiah, the Prince (The Christ)," would come. His sole purpose in coming is revealed in Daniel 9:24, because it was "The Christ" who would come to fulfill these promises. (1) He would "...finish the transgression." (2) He would "...make an end of sins." (3) He would "...make reconciliation for iniquity." (4) He would "...bring in everlasting righteousness." (5) He would "...seal up the vision and prophecy." (6) He would "...anoint (be anointed) the most Holy." The actual definition of the word "Christ (Strong's #5547)" is "anointed." Thus, Jesus of Nazareth was proven to be "the holy one (the anointed one) of God" when the Holy Ghost came upon Him at the Jordan River (See also; Isaiah 61:1-3; Luke 4:14-21; Acts 10:38). God confirmed that He is the Father of Jesus of Nazareth when the multitude heard His voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17).

John 1:32-34: "And John (the Baptist) bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God."

John 1:29: "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Over sixty years later, after all the other apostles have become martyrs for their testimony of Jesus, the apostle John writes these words (I John 3:5): "And ye know that he (Jesus, the Christ) was manifested to take away our sins." Regarding Jesus being the "seed of the woman," John writes, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (I John 3:8). Jesus, through His death on the cross, "bruised the head of the serpent." The apostle Paul confirms this when he writes of Jesus, "...that through death, He (Jesus) might destroy he that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14). Jesus Christ will return to this earth a second time. It is not necessary for Him to return, however, to "make an end of sins" and "bring in everlasting righteousness." These things He did at His first coming, which was the purpose of His death on the cross.

4. Know Why He Died For Us

Christ, who was with God and was God, became a man in order to have a body and blood to offer to "take away our sin." Of course he lived a perfect sinless life while on earth, but that was not what He came to do. There is an erroneous doctrine that tells us that Jesus obeyed the law and pleased God so perfectly that His "merit" gave Him an "overabundance" of favor with God. According to this doctrine, his "perfect lifestyle" is imputed to us in the form of "unmerited favor," and God "sees us" with the "righteousness of Christ" even though we are still sinners, who sin every day. This is a false doctrine which has its roots in Roman Catholicism of the dark ages. Christ came into the world to "make an end of sins" (Daniel 9:24-25). He was "made flesh (prepared a fleshly body)" in the womb of Mary, to fulfill the promise God gave that the "seed of the woman" would "bruise the head of the serpent," which He did through His death on the cross. He came as the "Lamb of God" to "take away the sin of the world," and He finished all that He came to do "through death" at Calvary.

Hebrews 2:14: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." We see all around us that Satan is raging "because he knoweth that he hath but a short time" (Revelation 12:12). He was "cast out of Heaven" when Jesus died on the cross, and "they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb..." (Revelation 12:10-11).

II Peter 2:24: "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."

Hebrews 9:27-28: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was ONCE OFFERED to BEAR THE SINS of many." Christ came into the world to "bear our sins" on the cross. He is not "bearing our sins" today as He sits at the right hand of the father, however. Everything He did for our redemption from sin He did through His death on the cross, and when He said "it is finished," everything He came into the world to do was accomplished. Peter says Jesus "bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that (in order that) we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness." The Greek text has no word for "should" in this text. Peter actually said "that we, being dead to sins, live unto righteousness." This is an absolute fact of the gospel for those who "abide in Christ." Our sin, often referred to as our "sin nature," is what Jesus nailed to the cross for "everyone who believeth" (Romans 1:16).

Hebrews 10:1-2: "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers ONCE PURGED should have had no more conscience of sins."

Hebrews 10:4: "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."

Hebrews 10:10: "...we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ ONCE for all."

Hebrews 10:14: "For by ONE offering HE HATH PERFECTED FOR EVER them that are sanctified."

Lack of Bible Reading Cited for U.S. Moral Decline

Wed, 05 Jun 2013 - 6:02 PM CST

A report released in March found that more than three-fourths of Americans (77 percent) believe morals and values are declining in the United States, with a lack of Bible reading cited as the most-cited cause.

The American Bible Society's research uncovered a significant disconnect in belief versus behavior. While 66 percent of those surveyed agreed that the Bible contains everything a person needs to know to live a meaningful life, 58 percent say they do not personally want wisdom and advice from the Bible, and 57 percent read it fewer than five times per year.

The State of the Bible 2013 survey, conducted by Barna Group on behalf of ABS, found that the Bible continues to dominate both mind space and book retail space as America's undisputed best-seller. One in six persons reported buying a copy of the Bible in the past year. Four out of five Americans identify the Bible as sacred, and the average household has 4.4 copies.

While 56 percent of adults believe Scripture should have a greater role in U.S. society, perceptions about the Bible have become increasingly polarized, with 6 million new self-identified Bible "antagonists" in the past year alone.

Those ages 18-28 are the least likely age group to read the Bible.

The disconnect between belief and action when it comes to Bible reading is troubling, according to Doug Birdsall, president of American Bible Society.

"Americans are telling us that the cure for declining morality is sitting on our bookshelves," Birdsall says. "But more than half of Americans are simply letting the cure gather dust."

Author: Pentecostal Evangel

AG News

Study Reveals New Insights on Family Breakdown

Mon, 03 Jun 2013 - 4:18 PM CST

A new study by family scholars shows that U.S. churches have paid little attention to the widespread experiences of those who grow up without married parents.

The report, "Does the Shape of Families Shape Faith?", encourages faith leaders to be more engaged on the topic, both for the health of churches and the sake of young people. One-quarter of today's young adults have parents who divorced, while a growing number of children are being raised by a parent or parents who never married.

How young adults approach questions of moral and spiritual meaning will influence broader trends in churches, the researchers suggest.

"The health and future of congregations depends upon understanding, reaching out to, and nurturing as leaders those who have come of age amid increasing family fragmentation," the study states.

Co-investigators of the report are Elizabeth Marquardt, director of the Center for Marriage and Families at the Institute for American Values; Amy Zietlow, an affiliate scholar at the Institute for American Values; and Charles E. Stokes, scholar in residence at Samford University.

The researchers report that when children of divorce reach adulthood, compared to those who grew up in intact families, they feel less religious overall and are less likely to attend church.

Understanding The Covenant of Grace

From Page 4

5. Trust in Him that Did It

The final criteria for "getting the covenant right" is to simply "trust in Christ" who finished our salvation through His death on the cross. In criteria #1, "Know who Christ is," there is a great emphasis in knowing that Christ is the creator of all things. This is most important, because only the creator of the old could discard it and bring in the new. He came to nail the old creation to His cross and create a new creation in Himself. "Knowing this, that **our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin**" (Romans 6:6-7).

Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:10, "We are his workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus....**" In II Corinthians 5:17, he says, "If any man be in Christ (created in Christ), *he is a new creature (new creation): old things are passed away (the old creation man is passed away); behold, all things (everyone who is in Christ) are become new.*" Only the creator could do it, and there is absolutely nothing we can do but believe what He came to do and trust in Him who did it.

Ephesians 1:12: "That we should be to the praise of his glory, **who first trusted in Christ.**" The first eleven verses of Ephesians record at least ten things God did for the complete redemption and restoration of fallen humanity. In verse eleven, the apostle tells us that God "worketh all things **after the counsel of His own will.**" In the twelfth verse, he tells us what His will is; "That we should be to the praise of his glory..." and in the last phrase of the same verse he tells us of whom he speaks; we "...who first **trusted in Christ.**"

Those who "first trusted in Christ" were those who received the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost. Paul included himself among those as one who was "born out of due season." The existence of such a people on earth brought great glory to Christ. There is no hint of that church being sinful, or of even one of those who God poured His Spirit upon having a sin problem. Paul tells us about that first church in Ephesians 1:22-23; "...the church, which is his body, **the fulness of him that filleth all in all.**" When we "get the covenant right," that is what the church will be once again.

Those raised in a family where their parents were happy were more than twice as likely to attend religious services, compared to those raised in homes where the parents amiably divorced.

The study found that of those young adults who regularly attended church at the time of their parents' divorce, two-thirds said no one - either from the pastoral staff or congregation - reached out to them.

"The resulting alienation from a life of faith can represent a second, silent schism in the child's life," the report states. "First there is the rupture of the marriage of the child's parents, then there is the rupture of the child's connection to a congregation and even to a life of faith."

Author: Pentecostal Evangel

Read The "Shepherds Voice" on our church web-site,



www.colmesneilfirstaog.com

Can you stand? Will your faith hold you in place? It will when you allow Jesus to strengthen you

Leslie Jordan

NOTE: This is one of Sister Leslie Jordan last writing she went to be with the Lord last month.

Look in Mark 6:26, "And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her." And for their sakes which sat with him. The Bible makes clear Herod thought highly of John the Baptist. You will notice a mention of Herod having a fear of John. He knew John to be just and holy while Herod was aware his own life was neither just nor holy. Herod's flesh ruled his life, he had a problem with a woman! She would be this downfall. Here was a man who liked fleshy, glitzy women, and he enjoyed flaunting them before his people.

Now on the day Herod and John the Baptist would reach their final meeting Herod becomes caught in a deadly trap created by weakness of his character, As is often true Herod's weak character was accompanied by an inflated ego. Here was a tall, handsome, powerful man who enjoyed the attention of all around him. Women were a favorite treat to this man, he chose them unwisely.

As the day of festivities drew on an all enjoyed Herod's birthday celebration. How regal and important was Herod. Everyone envied him. However near him sat a beautiful dramatic woman holding malice in her heart and an evil cruel plan in her mind. Herod had been determined to have this woman though she belonged to another. John had called Herod on the error of his having taken his brother's wife. While Herod could somewhat take the scolding of John the Baptist, his wife was a different matter. She hated John. It was Herodias who had put John in prison. The wicked woman had yet to complete her evil intention toward John the Baptist.

Excitement moved through the crowd; music filled the air, dancers in silk, colored like rainbows swirled through the arena. Music grew louder, excitement intensified as a dancer with fire about her whirled to the center. Focused fully on Herod Salome danced so exotically men melted. Herod lost his control; at her finish he foolishly walked himself into a very bad spot. "And for their sakes" Herod could not back off in front of his people. How many boys and men have fallen to these words?

And for their sakes which sat with him. Foolishly Herod had proclaimed loudly, "ask of me anything thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he swore unto her, whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom." The foolish man gave no thought to his outburst, no responsibility. What a lesson to be learned by Herod's words. In attempting to show his power he lost it to Herodias. She would control this situation, making the celebration a life changer.

Instructed by her mother Salome asked for the head of John the Baptist in a charger. Shortly the deed was done. One man lay in death while another who followed his flesh lost even more. Always there will be those around you who would pull you in a wrong direction. Can you stand against them? Will your faith hold you in place? It will when you allow Jesus to strengthen you.

A smile is a wrinkle that shouldn't be removed!

A smile is the lighting system of the face and the heating system of the HEART

A smile is a light in the window of your face that shows that your heart is at home.

I saw a hawk soar to the sky, and thought there will come a day when so will I.

**His powerful wings spread wide,
The graceful hawk soars in the sky,
He catches a wind and rises high,
Watching below I breathe a sigh,
For a day will come for me to rise,
Above this world to a home on high.**

**So when I see a hawk so strong,
I remember that it won't be long,
Lets live our life and sing our song,
Do the work we are given till we go home.
We go to a place where never comes wrong,
Let all the world see to the Lord we belong.**

Leslie Jordan

Every Morning You Have A Choice

We can live as though Christ died yesterday, rose today, and is coming tomorrow, or we can live as though Christ died, period. We can count blessings Or we can count life's blows and burdens. It's our choice.

All the FANTASTIC household products that make life so much easier today remind me of some instructions an Appalachian grandmother gave a new bride years ...ago concerning how to wash clothes. You might want to copy it and stick it up over your automatic washer and dryer.

WASHDAY, 1916

1. Build fire in backyard to heat kettle of rain water.
2. Set tubs so smoke won't blow in eyes if wind is blowing.
3. Shave one hold cake lie soap in boiling water.
4. Stir flour in cold water to smooth, then thin down with boiling water.
5. Sort things, make three piles, 1 pile white, 1 pile colored, 1 pile work britches and rags.
6. Rub dirty spots on board, scrub hard, then pile, rub colored, don't pile, just rinse in starch.
7. Take white things out of kettle with broomstick handle, then rinse and starch.
8. Hang old rags on fence.
9. Spread tea towels on grass.
10. Pore rinse water on flowers
11. Scrub porch with hot soapy water.
12. Turn tubs upside down.

AG News

This Week in AG History -- May 27, 1916
Wed, 29 May 2013 - 6:02 AM CST

The Mexican Revolution, a decade-long civil war beginning in 1910, changed the North American social landscape. Thousands of displaced people fled the armed conflict and social disruption in Mexico and sought refuge along the borderlands in the United States. It was among these refugees that Henry C. Ball, a young preacher in Ricardo, Texas, planted one of the first Hispanic Assemblies of God congregations.

H. C. Ball (1896-1989) accepted Christ at age 14 and joined the Methodist Church in Kingsville, Texas. Approximately 10 days after his conversion, Ball attended a service held by a missionary to Venezuela. At that service, he felt a tug in his heart to serve as a missionary to Mexican refugees in his area. Encouraged by his Methodist pastor, the very next Sunday Ball held his first evangelistic service.

Ball went from house to house, inviting Mexicans to the Spanish-language service he had planned in a schoolhouse in Ricardo. Ball was undeterred by the fact that he did not even know Spanish. He memorized a one-sentence Spanish-language invitation, and he brought a Spanish hymn and Bible to the service. Two visitors joined Ball in that first service in late 1910.

Ball was only 14 years old, he did not know Spanish, he had only accepted Christ weeks earlier, and yet he followed God's call and pioneered a church among the Mexican refugees in Texas. The young preacher persevered and, in 1912, the Methodist church

gave him a license to preach at age 16. In 1914, Ball was Spirit-baptized under the ministry of Felix Hale, a Pentecostal evangelist affiliated with the newly formed Assemblies of God. This put Ball at odds with his Methodist superiors, who dismissed him from the denomination. Ball's ordination was recognized by the Assemblies of God in January 1915, and his congregation of Mexicans became the seed from which much of the Hispanic work in the Assemblies of God grew.

The Pentecostal Evangel published frequent reports from Ball. The May 27, 1916, issue featured a photograph of the Asamblea de Dios in Ricardo, Texas, on the cover, and included an article by Ball about the new Mexican believers. He encouraged readers pray for the immigrants. He wrote, "Here they are on our land, poor, homeless and without Jesus."

Ball described the situation faced by the Mexicans: "The war in Mexico has driven many Mexicans from their homes in their native land to our side of the river. In the Rio Grande valley are many thousands of these refugees, besides the resident population. They have now been here some time, not able to return and fearful that their own nation may turn against them."

Ball challenged readers to financially support his missions work: "We have Jesus, but they have not, and know not how to look unto Him in time of trouble and danger. Shall we reach them this summer with the Gospel message?"

Ball demonstrated incredible entrepreneurship. In 1916, Ball published the first Spanish language Assemblies of God songbook, Himnos de Gloria, and began publishing a monthly periodical, La Luz Apostolica. In 1918 he became superintendent of the Hispanic churches. In 1924 he established Casa Evangelica de Publicaciones (Gospel Publishing House) and in 1926 he formed what became Latin American Bible Institute, both in San Antonio.

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Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, & glorify your father which is in Heaven
Matthew 5:16

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LOVE LIFTED ME

AG News

Convoy of Hope Responds, Relief Trucks on Site

Thu, 23 May 2013 - 8:37 AM CST

With assessment personnel already in Oklahoma on Monday, Convoy of Hope was able to respond quickly to the devastation that was created by the massive EF-5 tornado that tore through Moore, Oklahoma, on Monday. The first truck of disaster relief supplies arrived on Tuesday with two more trucks arriving Wednesday.

"What we're doing now is coordinating with partners and assessing where we will be most beneficial in the recovery process," says Paul Coroleuski, field services director. "We've got three tractor-trailers full of water, food and cleaning supplies ready for distribution."

Convoy of Hope's first three tractor-trailer loads of food, water and critical supplies began to be distributed at 10 a.m. Wednesday at New Life Bible Church in nearby Norman, Oklahoma, Convoy's first point of distribution. Crossroads Church (AG) in Oklahoma City will become another distribution point on Thursday. In addition to the tractor-trailers of relief supplies, Convoy of Hope deployed its disaster response mobile command center, a box truck and debris removal equipment.

"Our team will work with local partners to coordinate volunteers and get supplies to storm survivors quickly," says Stacy Lamb, a disaster response first responder for Convoy of Hope.

According to news service reports and the National Weather Service, the tornado originally touched down 5 miles south of Newcastle, Oklahoma, and traveled northeast approximately 20 miles, with a path of destruction about a mile wide. The damage inflicted indicated winds in excess of 200 miles per hour, qualifying it as an EF-5 tornado - as was the Joplin tornado that took place two years ago this week.

Convoy of Hope will continue to coordinate additional loads of relief supplies and the deployment of more team members in the coming days.



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