

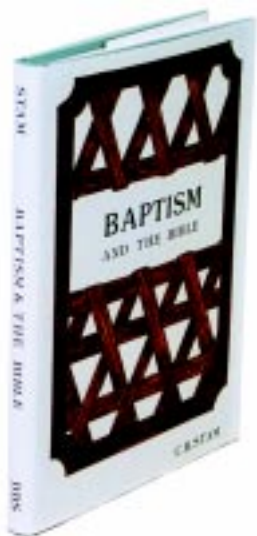
The **Berean Searchlight**

Studying God's Word, Rightly Divided

February 2000



WINTER BOOK OFFERS



Baptism and the Bible

By C. R. Stam

There is no other subject that has caused more confusion in the Church than “water baptism.” Since God is not the author of confusion, the problem unquestionably lies with a faulty system of interpretation. Pastor Stam isolates the problem in this work and presents a simple solution to the matter that the Church has overlooked for generations.

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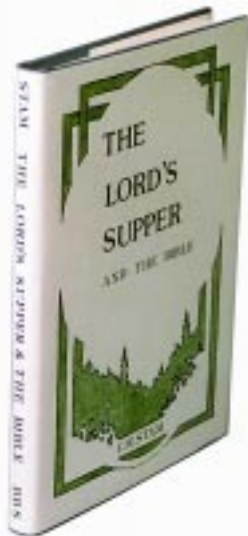
The Lord's Supper and the Bible

By C. R. Stam

In seeking the *truth* as to the Lord's Supper we must go to the Word of God alone. Here man's opinions and preferences are valueless and worse, for these are exactly what caused the confusion on the subject in the first place, and have perpetuated it in many quarters to this day. As you will see, Pastor Stam presents a clear case for the proper observance of the Lord's Supper during the administration of Grace.

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The *Berean Bible Society* is an organization for the promotion of Bible study by means of newspaper series, recorded Bible lessons, and the distribution of Bible study literature. It is a non-profit organization, a work of faith supported by the gifts of Christian friends.

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From the Editor to You:



Dearly Beloved,

“For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.” Our goal here at the *Berean Bible Society* has always been, and always shall be, with God’s help, “to make all men see what is the fellowship of the Mystery.” While this may be a worn out cliché to some, it is nevertheless the will of God in Christ Jesus for the Church today.

Thus we employ every means possible to share this good news with those who are willing to listen, hoping to deliver some from the commandments of men.

Of course, the most recent ministry we have adopted to accomplish this end is *Books on Tape*.

In addition to *Things That Differ* and *Exploring the Unsearchable Riches of Christ*, Brother Dave Allen has completed an *audio* version of your Editor’s book, *The Triumph of His Grace*. This is a great gift idea for a loved one or friend who may not have the time or the desire to read a book, but would be more than willing to listen to the message of grace by way of cassette tape.

We can picture it already, a hot cup of coffee, a crackling fire, and the Word rightly divided—it’s a marriage made in heaven! Once again, we want to thank Brother Allen for volunteering his time to make these texts a blessing to so many precious souls. —Pastor Sadler

Introductory Tape Offer

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By Paul M. Sadler

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From Illinois:

"Just want to say a big thank you for your prayers on my behalf during my recent surgery. God worked everything out very well and my recovery is going along pretty well also. I know it takes time for one's strength to return and it is so uplifting to know that friends are praying."

From Alabama:

"We so much enjoy the *Searchlight* for the *light* it shines on the truths of God's Word as we study it. We thank God for revealing the Mystery of Paul's gospel to us and for the peace it has brought to us. Please add our newlywed daughter and son-in-law to your mailing list."

From Wisconsin:

"We enjoyed Pastor Sadler's letter last month on Thanksgiving and we try to make the greater part of our prayers to be thankfulness."

From Washington:

"By no means have we forgotten about you and your very God-gifted ability to preach and teach the 'word rightly divided.' *The Crown of Rejoicing* was indeed no exception to your sound ministry. Thanks be to God that you do stand fast on that truth that was also delivered to you. What a blessing that is! I assure you that your ministry is much in our prayers and the enclosure is to lend a hand to publish the *Ephesians* book. Thanks be to God for your sound ministry." (Surely we are unworthy of such touching comments. Ed.)

From Pennsylvania:

"We are so thankful for *BBS* and the Word of God rightly divided. We have recently changed to a church where the Word of God is rightly divided, after many years of just going to church. We feel so blessed with the understanding of God's Word rightly divided. Our minds are like a sponge, soaking up His Word. Thank you for the great work."

From Texas:

"I found a February 1997 booklet and would like to get the December 1999 booklet called the *Berean Searchlight*. I moved to Texas a couple of years ago and used to get them in Michigan. I enjoyed your booklets in the past and would love one."

From Minnesota:

"I have intended for a long time to write and tell you how much I enjoy the *Berean Searchlight*. I was real pleased to read in the September issue that Rollin Wilson was added to your Board of Directors. I have known him for some time."

From Illinois:

"Thank you so very much for your faithfulness in sending me the *Searchlight*. It has really been a help to me as I study the Word of God and see the difference it makes when it is rightly divided. Please send me the book *Things That Differ* by Pastor Stam. Perhaps the Lord will use it to teach me how to share the truth of the *Mystery* in love—with others who see all of us in the *ultra* camp. May our Lord continue to give you wisdom and courage as you labor for Him." (We've been misrepresented for so long that people begin to believe the misrepresentations. The same was true in Paul's day, therefore, we like the apostle, must stand in defense and confirmation of the gospel. Ed.)

From Georgia:

"I have, over the years, learned about all I know from you. I am 87 years old and I want to thank you for being a friend to me. I thank the Lord for you."

From Wisconsin:

"Thank you for the current issue of the *Berean Searchlight*. I was delighted to find the video offer on Paul Sadler's *Exploring the Unsearchable Riches of Christ*. Please send the 2 tape set to me. I really enjoyed reading Russ Miller's article on, *A Covenant of Blood* in the November 1999 issue."

From New Jersey:

“Just a thank you for your faithfulness to the Word of God rightly divided. God brought my family and me to a Grace Church 17 years ago after attending a Reformed Church all our life. What a wonderful blessing it has been to know the full assurance of the knowledge of Christ.” (It is troubling to see how many dispensationalists are enamored by Progressive Dispensationalism, which is nothing more than another form of Reformed Theology. Once again, Paul’s gospel is the answer to the prevailing theological confusion. Ed.)

From the Philippines via Internet:

“BBS literature makes the world understand more about the significance of man’s life and how to be saved. Thank you, too, for always being there, a part of the salvation of some people, a great help in spreading God’s Word to others. May God bless the ministry as well as the ones who labor in the Lord.”

From Iowa:

“We pray that God will bless and guide you and that many will hear the gospel and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved.”

From Illinois:

“Thank you for sending me the *Berean Searchlight* monthly. Will you please include my brother on your mailing list?”

From California:

“I can’t thank you enough for *Exploring the Unsearchable Riches of Christ*. Will you pray for me? I live at the Veterans Home in Yountsville, California where I attend an interdenominational chapel. We are now studying the Book of Acts. We have so many different people with different backgrounds including our chaplain. I am, so far, the only one who rightly divides the Word. I need prayer.”

From Washington:

“Thanks be to God for your continued faithfulness in the ministry of grace He has called you all to. May you be blessed and continue to bless with various ministries as we start the new millennium.”

From Wisconsin:

“I look forward to receiving the *Searchlight* each month and enjoy reading and learning from it.”

From North Carolina:

“Thank you for your faithfulness in sending me the *Berean Searchlight*. I enjoy reading the timely articles it contains. Please use the enclosed check as our Lord and God directs.”

From New York:

“I’m looking forward to your new book on *Ephesians*. We praise the Lord for your ministry and insight into your teaching on the Word. We pray that He will continue to make you a blessing as you have been to us.” (The *Ephesians* commentary was quite an undertaking. Hope you enjoy it, as much as I enjoyed working on it. Ed.)

From Kansas:

“The *Berean Searchlight* has a place with our daily devotions. Praise to you and our Savior for His Word through your publications.”

From Florida:

“I would like to take the time to thank you all at *BBS* for all that you have done for me in my journey to understand more about right division and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery. It is through you at *BBS* and the ministry of Pastor Stam, that the Lord has opened my eyes to His plan for man from beginning to end and because of this I have been able to share my understanding with others.”

“These [Bereans] were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” —Acts 17:11

The Life and Letters of the Apostle Peter (Part II)

By Paul M. Sadler

While the opening words of I Peter clearly identify Peter as the one who penned this letter, it is not until the closing passages that we learn it was written from *Babylon*. “*The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you*” (I Pet. 5:13). Tradition dismisses a literal interpretation of this passage. It claims Peter lived in the West and was crucified upside-down at Rome. But, as we know, first century church history is an uncertain guide. Those who hold to the traditional view must resort to an allegorical meaning. Thus, they allege *Babylon* is actually *Rome*.

Whether or not Peter was martyred at Rome after he ministered the gospel at Babylon is immaterial. The fact of the matter is, according to the Scriptures, he wrote this epistle (probably 60 AD) from Babylon, on the Euphrates where a large community of Jews resided at the time. If the term “church” is taken literally, which precedes Babylon in the above passage, and the “elect together with you” that follows it is literal, what justification could there possibly be to allegorically make Babylon to be Rome?

Further evidence that Peter was ministering in the East is found in chapter one: “*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.*” Peter naturally addresses the regions in eastern Asia Minor: Pontus,

Galatia, and Cappadocia first because they were the closest to him geographically. As he worked his way westward he concluded with Asia and Bithynia, the farthest away from the point of origin. We follow the same principle today. It should also be remembered that while Paul’s gospel had its greatest realm of influence in the West, the kingdom gospel was the most influential in the East at that time. So it was quite natural for Peter to be ministering in Babylon since he was a minister of the *circumcision* (Gal. 2:7,8).

THE DISPERSION

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (I Pet. 1:1).

Clearly Peter was writing to his own countrymen who were *strangers scattered* (Gr. *Diaspora*) that is, “sojourners of the dispersion” throughout Pontus, Galatia, etc. The phrase, “of the dispersion” is *distinctly Jewish* (John 7:35). It refers to the Jews who were living in other nations outside the Promised Land. After the Assyrian and Babylonian Captivities, for example, many Israelites were unable to relocate to Palestine for obvious reasons. In fact, generations later, some of their descendants scattered throughout Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia attended the feast of Pentecost. Moved by Peter’s address, many of these converts returned home after the

events of Pentecost and took the good news of the kingdom gospel with them (see Acts 2:5-12 cf. 2:14-41). Perhaps the most notable dispersion came when the followers of the Messiah were driven from their homeland after the stoning of Stephen. As it has been correctly observed, “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.” “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the Word...to none but unto the Jews only” (Acts 8:4 cf. 11:19).

Apparently, it was these brethren, not Peter, who established the kingdom churches in the regions of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. Peter adds an interesting comment in this regard when he speaks to his hearers about the message of the prophets:

“Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven” (I Pet. 1:12).

The phrase “by *them* that have preached the gospel unto you” plainly indicates others had led them to the truth that Christ was the Messiah of Israel. Having learned these saints were walking through the fires of persecution, Peter wrote to these Jewish assemblies to *confirm* the faith that was first delivered to them, and explained, as we shall see, why the promises of the fathers were not being fulfilled.

While we respect the views of others on the matter, we do not believe that the twelve apostles, nor the kingdom saints became members of the Body of Christ. In

addition to being inconsistent with the text, this view confuses the two programs of God. Furthermore, there would have been no need for Paul’s apostleship if this were the case. But there is one question that some are sure to raise: “If those living during the dispensation of Promise were incorporated into the dispensation of the Law, why is it beyond reason that those ‘in Christ’ before Paul became members of the Body of Christ at the beginning of this present dispensation?”

First and foremost, the dispensation of Promise and the dispensation of the Law were *both* under the umbrella of the Prophetic Program. Those living under the Promise became the recipients of the law without an interruption in their program. The addition of the law was merely a further development in God’s plans and purposes for the earth. It was *added* to the Promise because of transgressions (Gal. 3:18,19).

Second, the Mystery has temporarily interrupted the Prophetic Program. It is a *new* revelation that was committed to the Apostle Paul concerning God’s plans and purposes for the heavenlies. Hence, the answer to the question, why Paul? The Mystery introduces us for the first time to a new entity called the Church, the Body of Christ. Since this new entity is *unrelated* to prophecy, to teach that the kingdom saints became members of the Body of Christ only serves to muddy the waters.

THOSE “IN CHRIST”

A casual reading of Peter’s letters will leave the reader with one

conclusion, Peter was writing to the chosen nation, specifically the little flock within the nation. "Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are *in Christ* Jesus. Amen" (I Pet. 5:14). The phrase "in Christ" has been a stumbling block for many over the years. In fact, some have drawn the conclusion that Peter's usage of this phrase is an indication that he was writing to the Body of Christ. But Peter's usage of "in Christ," like the terms "gospel" and "church" must be qualified by the context.

The phrase "in Christ" is to be understood in two senses in the Scriptures. When Paul says, "Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were *in Christ* before me," he obviously isn't using the phrase in connection with the Body of Christ. Why? Because the present dispensation regarding the truth of the one Body was yet a secret hidden in the mind of God prior to it being revealed to Paul. Therefore, Paul is using the phrase "in Christ" in its broadest sense. He is speaking about those who were "in Christ" before him *redemptively*.

Peter uses the Ark to illustrate this great truth. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit. By which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein

few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us" (I Pet. 3:20,21).

As the judgment of God descended upon the wickedness of man, the world that then was perished in a watery grave. Only Noah and his family were saved through the universal flood. Though the storms of God's wrath raged without, Noah and his family were safe and secure in the Ark, the antitype of which is *Christ*. He is the ark of salvation and all that are "in Him" are beyond the reach of God's judgment.

So then, it can be safely said that *all* believers in every age are "in Christ" redemptively, since they are essentially saved and forgiven on the basis of His shed blood. However, only the saved of this present age have the unique privilege of being "in Christ" dispensationally, that is, members of the Body of Christ. Today there is a new creation, Jews and Gentiles in one Body *without distinction!* "For as we have many members in one Body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one Body **in Christ**, and every one members one of another" (Rom. 12:4,5). This truth is one of the unsearchable riches of Christ only found in the Pauline revelation.

Peter, then, uses the phrase "in Christ Jesus" in its broadest doctrinal sense of redemption as he addresses the redeemed in Israel. We will allow the Letters of Peter to speak for themselves. "But ye are a chosen generation, a *royal priesthood*, an *holy nation*, a peculiar people." "For ye were as *sheep*

going astray; but are now returned unto the *Shepherd* and Bishop of your souls.” “Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, *whose daughters ye are*, as long as ye do well” (I Pet. 2:9,25; 3:6).

“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed...For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (II Pet. 1:10,11,19,21).

As you can see, Peter’s terminology and phraseology aligns itself perfectly with the Prophetic Program. In fact, the same can be said of all the General or Hebrew Epistles, including the Book of Revelation. Brethren, just as we turn to Paul’s Gentile epistles today for our doctrine and walk, the future Tribulation saints will turn to the Hebrew Epistles for timely instructions during the coming day of the Lord. This doesn’t mean, however, that we shouldn’t study these writings. Quite the contrary, we are to proclaim the whole counsel of God in light of Paul’s revelation.

Some have pointed to the strong Paulinism in Peter’s letters as evidence that he was writing to the members of the Body of Christ. We do not deny that Paul’s ministry had a profound influence upon Peter. We need only to compare Peter’s message on the day of Pentecost with his letters and it

is obvious he had a fuller understanding of the Cross. But simply because Peter freely uses Pauline terms like *grace* and *peace* under the direction of the Holy Spirit, in no way implies that he was preaching Paul’s gospel. While Peter acknowledged Paul’s apostleship and openly confirmed his message, he did not proclaim it as truth for his hearers to obey. We follow the same principle today with the ministry of the twelve and the kingdom gospel.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Both Peter and Paul proclaimed the kingdom of God, which is sure to shock some and startle others. It is nevertheless true! Since the phrase “kingdom of God” is like a canopy over both Prophecy and Mystery, the context will again be the determining factor as to its specific usage. Having preached the gospel of the grace of God for two years at Ephesus, Paul paid one last visit to the Ephesian elders on his way to Jerusalem. This was to be his final farewell: “And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the *kingdom of God*, shall see my face no more” (Acts 20:25).

There is little question that the twelve also preached the kingdom of God: “Then He called His twelve disciples together...and He sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick” (Luke 9:1,2 cf. II Pet. 1:11). In the gospel according to Matthew, the phrase *kingdom of heaven* is used interchangeably to show that the curse is going to be lifted, allowing the desert to blossom like a rose. In other words, it will literally be

like heaven upon the earth (Isa. 35:1-10).

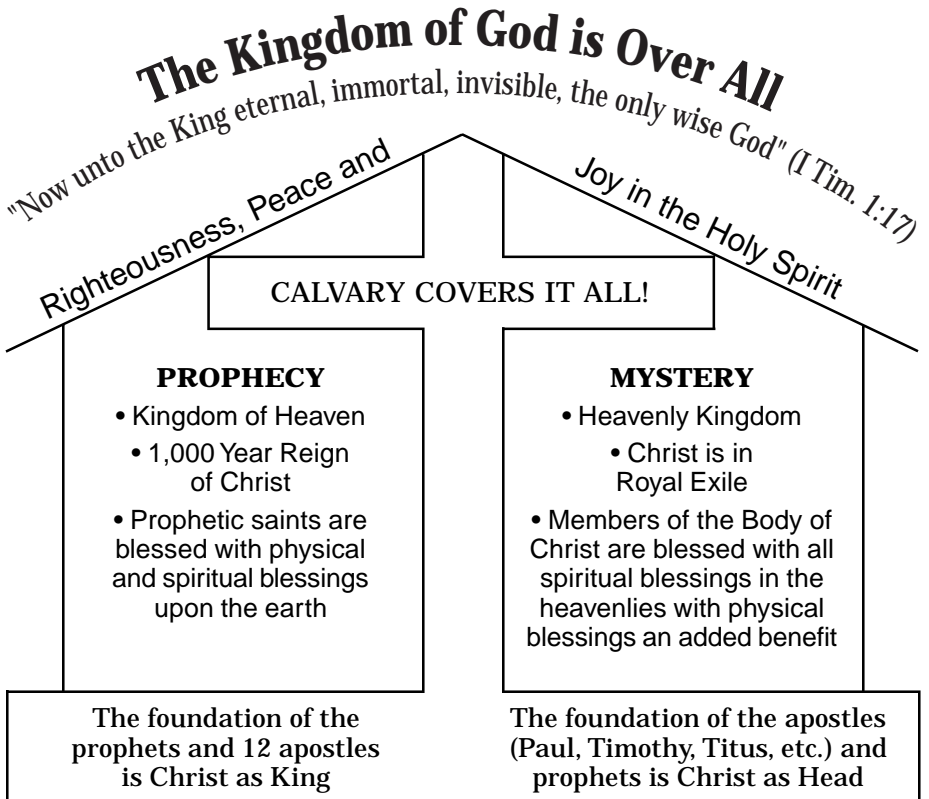
If you carefully study the following diagram you will note the two aspects of our phrase. On the left side of the page, Peter preached the kingdom of God in accordance with God's earthly purpose. Thus, Peter's letters remain consistent with this theme. This helps us understand his frequent references to the Second Coming of Christ to establish His kingdom.

Those who believe that Peter was writing exclusively to the Body of Christ are faced with a real dilemma here. Since Peter only holds out the hope of the Second Coming to his hearers these brethren are forced to teach a post-tribulational Rapture, which

is unthinkable. Peter's writings reflect the *righteousness* of the millennial reign of Christ, *peace* from Israel's enemies when the Prince of Peace returns, and the *joy* of the Lord filling the Promised Land.

On the right side of the page, Paul preached the kingdom of God in accordance with God's secret purpose. Thus, Paul's epistles remain consistent with this theme. Once again, this helps us understand his frequent references to the Rapture with its heavenly hope and calling. Paul's writings reflect that Christ is our *righteousness*, Christ is our *peace*, and our *joy* is in the Holy Spirit who has identified us with Christ.

The foundation upon which this superstructure rests is Christ. But



notice the foundation has been laid in two sections. As we know, the Old Testament prophets and 12 apostles of the kingdom proclaimed Christ as King, the rightful heir to the throne of David. On the other hand, the Apostle Paul and the prophets of grace ministered the truth that Christ is the Head of the Church, which

is His Body. Little wonder Paul emphatically states: "Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's [Peter's] foundation" (Rom. 15:20). By God's grace, may we also be careful not to build upon Peter's foundation.

To Be Continued!



QUESTION BOX

"I've long wondered about a certain misquote in the 'Christmas Story' account of Matthew 2:6, 'And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art NOT the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.' Surely this is not a translation error in the KJV, but since the word 'not' is absent in Micah 5:2 from which the Pharisees are quoting, what is their point in giving Herod such misinformation?"

It should be remembered that the religious leaders did not read the passage from Micah that day. Copies of such writings were rare indeed at the time. Thus they merely *paraphrased* the prophecy because they sensed that Herod really wasn't interested in the minute details. As they say in accounting, he wanted the "bottom line." The objective of Herod was to learn the location of the Christ child that he might put this adversary to death (Matt. 2:13,16). After all, he was the king, although not the rightful heir to the throne.

As we know, God sometimes reveals truth through unlikely sources. For example, the Scriptures state the following concerning Caiaphas who *condemned* our Lord: "And one of them, named Caiaphas...said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people....And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation" (John 11:49-51).

In like manner, Matthew accurately records for us what the scribes said to Herod. "And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art **not the least** among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel" (Matt. 2:6). If we compare the statement in question with the Old Testament, Micah said: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, *though thou be little among the thousands of Judah*" (Micah 5:2). The words of the prophet emphasized the insignificance of Bethlehem in the sight of men. By contrast, the Holy Spirit uses the paraphrase of the scribes to show the spiritual greatness of the little town. Thus the lowly was transformed by the glory of the spiritual. —Pastor Sadler

The Day of Itching Ears

By Cornelius R. Stam

For the professing Church the day of theological controversy has passed. *Ecumenism* is now the word on every tongue. Church leaders appear to have become convinced that the stifling confusion in the Church can be overcome only by all of us getting together, minimizing our differences, and emphasizing those doctrines on which we all agree. As a result, some of the most important doctrines of Scripture are neither denied nor affirmed; they are ignored. But little matter, for the objective now is not to be true to the written Word of God but to see to it that the Church is “strong” and commands the world’s respect.

Ecumenism, sad to say, has made significant inroads among evangelical believers too. All too seldom do men of God stand up to defend by the Scriptures the truths they believe and proclaim. The theological debate has given place to dialogue, in which two individuals or groups sit down together to discuss their differences and see if there is not some basis for agreement. This appears generous and objective, but too often convictions are compromised and the truth watered down by such undertakings, with the result that the Spirit’s power is sacrificed for numerical strength. No man of God can speak in the power of the Spirit when he places *anything* before the Word and Will of God. Nor can the Church ever be truly united and strong unless *she* puts God’s Word and Will first and

takes her place in the world as Christ’s ambassador on alien territory (See II Cor. 5:20).

But what do the Scriptures say about this new “open-mindedness,” this new “let’s all get together” trend?

OUR LORD’S WARNING

During our Lord’s earthly ministry He warned His disciples: “*Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees*” (Matt. 16:6).

The disciples did not immediately grasp the significance of the Lord’s warning. Realizing that they had forgotten to take bread with them, they supposed that He referred to the leaven which their bakers used and concluded that the Pharisees and Sadducees were evidently out to poison their food!

To correct this mistake our Lord had but to remind them how, with but a few loaves, He had fed five thousand people at one time and four thousand at another. They themselves had taken up baskets full of the fragments on both occasions. Surely, then, *He* could supply them with food!

“Then understood they how that He bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees (Ver. 12).

Someone *was* out to poison them—spiritually! It is doubtful that the Pharisees and Sadducees meant to propagate poisonous doctrines, but in their pride and hypocrisy they were the ready tools

of Satan. It was because of the destructive qualities of these doctrines that our Lord had used the term "leaven" to describe them. Where false doctrine is concerned, it takes but a little to do a great deal of harm. Referring to this very thing Paul warned the Galatians that "*a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*" (Gal. 5:9).

What was so dangerous about the teachings of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? In general it was that the Pharisees *added* to the written Word (Matt. 23) and the Sadducees *took from* it (Acts 23:8). *Both were dangerous*, and our Lord warned His disciples to *BEWARE* of *both*. We do well to take this lesson to heart, for the Pharisees and Sadducees are with us still—those who add to the Word of God and those who take from it.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE PHARISEES

"The doctrine of the Pharisees" has held a prominent place in the Church throughout its history. The Reformation did not put an end to it by any means, for still today vast numbers of religious people subscribe to it.

The leaders of Christendom have added all sorts of rituals, restrictions, and requirements to God's revealed program for His Church in this dispensation of Grace, and multitudes of sincere believers follow like sheep, instead of searching the Scriptures daily to see whether these things really do belong to His program for our day.

Look at the members of Christ's Body. Many have placed themselves under the Law, while others are trying to recover the miraculous

signs of Pentecost, or are striving to carry out a "great commission" that is not theirs. They observe holy days, baptism, footwashing, and all sorts of other forms and ceremonies which are contrary to God's program for this dispensation, as revealed in the epistles of Paul. As a result the Church is a Babel of confusion and Satan is well satisfied.

How perverse is the heart of man! God reveals the Substance and lo, His people go back to the shadows! He demonstrates the all-sufficiency of Christ's redemptive work and behold, His people continue to observe the rites that pointed to it. Indeed, they add ceremonies which He never commanded at all! In grace God postpones the judgment and the earthly reign of Christ, to offer grace and reconciliation to His enemies and lo, His servants do not even understand and go about vainly trying to "establish His kingdom."

They do not *deny* that we are commissioned to proclaim God's offer of grace and reconciliation, but they *add another commission* and so confuse the God-given message. They do not *deny* the all-sufficiency of Christ's finished work, but they *add* unscriptural and undispensational teachings and forms and ceremonies, and so confuse and adulterate God's clear message of grace.

This is "the doctrine of the Pharisees" and it is *dangerous*.

Added error blinds men's minds to the truth. Those who add the so-called "Great Commission" to God's program for this dispensation cannot fully appreciate the

glory of our Lord's "great commission" to Paul and to us (II Cor. 5:14-21; Eph. 3:8,9; *et al*). Those who go back under the Law of Moses or even back to Pentecost cannot fully appreciate the glory of our Lord's finished work or "the exceeding riches of His grace." Those who observe footwashing, water baptism, or holy days cannot fully understand the mystery of God's purpose and grace. These added things hang as a veil before their eyes and blind them to the glories of their position in the heavenlies in Christ as members of His Body.

Our Lord charged the Pharisees with "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" and with "making the Word of God of none effect through your [their] tradition" (Mark 7:7,13). This is being done on every hand today as religious leaders add to God's glorious "grace" program ceremonies and observances which belonged to former dispensations, or which He never commanded at all. This is dangerous to our spiritual welfare and we should "beware" of it.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE SADDUCEES

But if Satan cannot deceive us with "the doctrine of the Pharisees" he will seek to accomplish his purpose through "the doctrine of the Sadducees."

In comparison with the bigoted Pharisees, the Sadducees were the "advanced thinkers" of their day. Not that they did not also substitute human tradition for the Word of God, but they made more of the human intellect and refused to believe certain truths which were

"...some sincere Christians, wishing to be intellectual and open-minded, place themselves in positions of great spiritual danger."

supernatural in character. The Sadducees have a host of followers in our day with its emphasis on the intellectual.

But our Lord *warned* His disciples against the Sadducees too. He said "*Take heed....Beware*" and described their doctrine as leaven because a little of it can spread so fast.

This warning is sorely needed today since some sincere Christians, wishing to be intellectual and open-minded, place themselves in positions of great spiritual danger.

On the premise that they are mature and are seeking for the truth, such people often spend their time examining all the different viewpoints they can find and so make shipwreck of the faith. We should be careful about assuming that we are mature either intellectually or spiritually. To the puffed-up Corinthian believers Paul wrote:

"Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become [take the position of] a fool, that he may be wise" (I Cor. 3:18).

"And if a man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know" (I Cor. 8:2).

The fact is that we cannot trust our intellects. Surely the sharp disagreements among the world's

greatest intellects should teach us this. These disagreements exist because, as the Bible teaches, the human mind, like the human heart, has become depraved by sin.

THE THESSALONIANS, THE BEREANS, AND THE ATHENIANS

But were not the Bereans commended for listening with open minds to teachings which they had never heard before? Yes, when they were *confronted* with them. It was the Athenians, *not* the Bereans, who made it their policy to consider as many viewpoints as possible on every subject (Acts 17:18-21).

The strength of the Bereans was that *they kept close to the Scriptures*. When *confronted* with some new doctrine, they did indeed give it an interested hearing, but *then "searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so"* (Acts 17:11). Had they found anything in Paul's message which contradicted the Scriptures they would immediately have rejected it. And for this God calls them "noble." They were the truly great, the spiritual aristocracy of their day.

Too many believers today aspire to be like the Athenians rather than the Bereans. They say they wish to have open minds, and this is good if it is remembered that an open mind is like an open mouth; not everything should be put into it.

The Athenians went to the other extreme from the Thessalonians, who would not even consider a new doctrine when *confronted* with it—would not even consider it in the light of the Scriptures.

The Bereans were the wisest of the three. They kept close to that blessed Book, and, when confronted with unfamiliar teachings, immediately subjected them to the test of Scripture.

This is the wisest course even if only because we are all limited in time and strength. Obviously we cannot spend a great deal of time looking into the conflicting teachings of men without sacrificing a great deal of much-needed time for Bible study, and in the measure that we do this we are bound to grow spiritually weaker.

THE QUESTION OF EXPOSURE

There are those who argue that believers cannot be strengthened against error without being exposed to it. Our Lord knew better. He did not invite the Pharisees and the Sadducees to address His audiences. Rather He *warned* His audiences against the "leaven" of the Pharisees and the Sadducees and kept teaching His hearers *the truth*.

The depravity of the human heart and mind is such that the believer is not strengthened against error by constant exposure to it; he is strengthened against error by feeding consistently upon the Word of God. Exposure to error strengthens the believer only as it drives him to the Word of God. Show me a Christian who is always "considering all sides" and I will show you one who will fail dismally to give the Scriptural answer to false teaching—if indeed he is not taken in by false teaching himself. But show me a Christian who spends his time

with that blessed Book and I will show you one who, strong in the faith, can easily answer his adversaries by the Scriptures. Paul wrote to young Pastor Timothy:

“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ... Preach the Word...For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears” (II Tim. 4:1-3).

And what was to be the result of this “itching ears” condition, this passion to hear teachers of all schools of thought expound their various doctrines? Hear the divine prediction:

“And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (Ver. 4).

What thoughtful student of the Word will deny that we have reached this point in the history of the professing Church, that the day of “itching ears” is upon us?

The desire to “give everyone a hearing,” as it were, may seem superficially to indicate spiritual greatness, but actually it is of the flesh and is based upon the exalted presumption that it is safe for *me* to trust *my* intellect, even though the greatest intellects have disagreed over the most vital subjects. Where our intellects are concerned we are wiser to

“The desire to ‘give everyone a hearing,’ as it were, may seem superficially to indicate spiritual greatness, but actually it is of the flesh....”

heed the Spirit-inspired exhortation of one truly great intellect, the Apostle Paul:

“Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (II Cor. 10:5).

The Apostle Paul did not assume that his followers were mature enough to consider all religious viewpoints. He delivered his God-given message and *warned* his hearers and readers against false teachings.

To the Corinthians he wrote:

“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (II Cor. 11:3).

Reminding the Colossians of his labor and strife and toil and conflict to establish them in the faith, he warns:

“Beware lest any man spoil [rob] you....Let no man beguile you...” (Col. 2:8,18).

He did not suggest to the Ephesian elders that it might be big of them occasionally to invite the legalists or the gnostics or some other heterodox teachers in to address their audiences. He rather impressed upon them their responsibility to protect their congregations from false teaching. Read carefully and prayerfully his very words, as found in Acts 20:28-31:

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with His own blood.

“For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

“Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

“Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.”

Even those two outstanding pastors, Timothy and Titus, were warned against the “leaven” of false teaching. The apostle exhorts Timothy:

“Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee” (I Tim. 4:16).

This passage explains why some pastors have been unable to save their hearers from error and spiritual shipwreck. Certainly it teaches the *danger* of false doctrine to both pastor and people.

Throughout his two epistles to Timothy the apostle *warns* his son in the faith against those who “*teach otherwise*” and exhorts him to “*fight the good fight of the faith*.” How earnestly he beseeches young Timothy to stay close to the Word of God and especially to the Word of God committed *to him* for *this present dispensation*:

“O Timothy, keep [guard] that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding...oppositions of science falsely so called” (I Tim. 6:20).

“Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

“That good thing which was committed unto thee keep [guard] by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us” (II Tim. 1:13,14).


In his letter to Titus the apostle declares that a bishop must be “blameless as the steward of God” (Titus 1:7).

“Holding fast the faithful Word... that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and convince the gainsayers” (Ver. 9).

Never does Paul advise even the strongest, most mature man of God to seek out the doctrines of those who “teach otherwise” so that they may know how to deal with them. He rather exhorts them to keep strong in the truth, ever ready to meet false doctrine with *the Word of God*.

When you are confronted with the familiar sign, “BEWARE OF THE DOG,” be wise and keep out of the way. If you ignore the warning and have to flee torn and bruised, *that is your fault*. Nor can you expect God to protect you from spiritual harm and loss if you ignore His admonition to beware of false doctrine.

Do not presume: “I am mature. I will never be confused or overthrown by error.” *BEWARE!* This is the course of *obedience*. This is the course of *wisdom*. This is the course of *humility*.

Every believer should remember that “*the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God...because they are spiritually discerned*” (I Cor. 2:14). It was by the Spirit that our eyes were opened to the most vital truths which confront mankind. Therefore it behooves us to protect ourselves from error and spiritual harm by consistent, prayerful, believing study of that blessed Book of which the Spirit is the Author. 

An Answer To: “Easter, Should It Be In Your Bible?”

By Joel Finck

Pastor of *Grace Bible Church*, Rapid City, South Dakota

“Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also (Then were the days of unleavened bread). And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.”

—Acts 12:1-4

Here in Acts 12:4 the term “Easter” is the translation of the Greek word, *pascha*. In all of its 28 other occurrences in the New Testament it is rendered “passover.” Acts 12:4 is the lone exception.

The careful student of Scripture will immediately ask, “Why should a word which is so consistently translated one way, be translated another way here?” We believe that when all things are carefully considered, from the Word of God, we will reach the conclusion that *pascha* should be rendered “passover” in this text, just as it is in the other 28 places.

TWO FEASTS, ONE OBSERVANCE

While it is true that the feasts of passover and unleavened bread are two distinct entities, God’s prescribed method of observing them led to them being considered one and the same. This is because they were observed together as

one festival during the first of three yearly convocations in Israel. “Three times thou shall keep A FEAST unto me in the year” (Exod. 23:14). Notice that it does not say “thou shall keep some feasts” but “A FEAST,” even though two feasts were held at this time. Deuteronomy 16:16 further explains, “Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles....”

That these two feasts were observed as one is confirmed in Ezekiel’s prophecy concerning their future observance in the kingdom: “In the first month, in the fourteenth day of the month, ye shall have the passover, A FEAST OF SEVEN DAYS; unleavened bread shall be eaten” (Ezek. 45:21). It’s obvious from this text that the entire week was considered the “passover” even though the seven days of unleavened bread are also mentioned. This is why Luke 22:1 says “the feast of unleavened bread...is called the passover.” Luke 22:7 goes on to say, “Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed.” To say that “where both the terms passover and ‘days (or day) of unleavened bread’ are found in the same passage refer to the two as distinct entities” is forced at best; untrue at worst.

WHY DID HEROD WAIT?

Was Herod waiting for a Jewish or a pagan festival to end before bringing Peter forth to the people (Acts 12:4)? Scriptural evidence points to the Jewish passover, not the pagan “Easter.”

As has already been pointed out, the word translated “Easter” here is consistently rendered “passover” in all other places. But what about the argument that the passover itself was already finished, since Peter was arrested during “the days of unleavened bread?” There are two distinctly Scriptural possibilities which adequately answer this without interjecting a pagan holiday into the text. The first is the fact, already mentioned, that the passover is already identified in Scripture as “a feast of seven days” (Ezek. 45:21). The second is, to borrow an expression from the world of sports, “it’s not over ’til it’s over.” According to Numbers 9:9-12, a SECOND passover was scheduled for those who may have become ceremonially defiled and therefore unable to participate in the first. “...If any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be in a journey afar off, yet he shall keep the passover unto the Lord. The fourteenth day of the SECOND month at even they shall keep it...” (Num. 9:10,11). The normal passover, of course, was held the fourteenth day of the FIRST month.

The best explanation for Herod’s delay in bringing Peter out to the people, then, is that he was simply waiting for the first passover festival (including the days of unleavened bread) to run its course.

But for those who would press the issue with technicalities over terminology, Acts 12:4 could be referring to the second passover which was only a few weeks away.

HEROD: PAGAN, PIOUS, OR PRAGMATIC

We would in no way wish to suggest that this Herod (known in history as Agrippa I) was a true believer, even under the Jewish program. But we do beg to differ with the view that he was strictly a pagan Roman with no reason to reverence the Jewish passover. While it is true that Agrippa I was educated in Rome, his ancestry can be traced to the Idumeans (or Edomites, descendants of Esau). His grandfather, Herod the Great, had constructed the temple in Jerusalem which stood at the time of Christ. This was not done out of his love for God, but for pragmatic reasons: to gain favor with the Jews. Agrippa’s uncle, Herod Antipas initially held off the execution of John the Baptist because “he feared the multitude, because they counted him a prophet” (Matt. 14:5). Other Roman-appointed leaders in Israel showed deference to the Jews (for example, Festus in Acts 25:9), so why shouldn’t Herod Agrippa I do the same?


Furthermore, Agrippa’s daughter, Drusilla, is called a “Jewess” in Acts 24:24 and his son, Agrippa II is described by Paul as a man who “believest...the prophets” (Acts 26:27). There was obviously a strong Jewish influence on this entire family, so we should not think it strange that in the text in question (Acts 12:4) Herod is

thinking of the Jewish passover, not some pagan festival.

Now concerning the question, "What reason is there to believe the Jews would have been upset by Peter being killed at their passover?" There's plenty of reason to think this, most importantly, the Scriptures: Mark 14:1,2 says, "After two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death. But they said, *not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people.*" If the very chief priests expected an *uproar* over an execution during a holy festival, why should it seem strange that the king would also recognize this sentiment in the people over which he ruled?

The fact that Christ was actually killed during this time simply

illustrates the significance of His death. Christ was killed in accordance with the fulfillment of Old Testament types and pictures. God arranged for His death during the passover festival to show that the fulfillment of the types took place right on schedule. God simply overruled the sentiment that the chief priests had anticipated in order to carry out His divine plan. But in the case of Peter, there was no divine time schedule to meet, therefore we find the delay of Herod's actions in respect of the wishes of the people.

The Scriptural evidence is clear, the *pascha* refers to the Jewish passover, not a pagan holyday. If there were no need by some to defend a particular translation of a particular word, no one would have ever imagined that the Holy Spirit meant "Easter" when He said *pascha*. 

The Slippery Slope of Liberalism

"You're just out of date," said young Pastor Bate
To one of our faithful old preachers
Who had carried for years in travail and tears
The gospel to poor sinful creatures.
"You still preach on Hades, and shock cultured ladies
"With your barbarous doctrine of blood!
You're so far behind you will never catch up—
"You're a flat tire stuck in the mud!"
For some little while, a bit of a smile
Enlightened the old preacher's face.
Being made the butt of ridicule's cut
Did not ruffle his sweetness and grace.
Then he turned to young Bate, so suave and sedate.
"Catch up, did my ears hear you say?
Why, I couldn't succeed if I doubled my speed,
"My friend, *I'm not going your way!*"

—Author Unknown

THE BBI BYLINE

Gifts From God

By Pastor Richard Ware

Before I came to know Christ as my Savior, at the age of 25, I was a “self-made man.” I was young, healthy, somewhat wealthy, had a good marriage and family, and enjoyed life. I looked at all that I had as things that I had worked for and earned without anyone giving them to me. I believed that my life was in God’s hands, but I never saw anything in my life as gifts from God.

Then, through the faithful witness of a dear person, I came to know Jesus Christ as my Savior, and received God’s gift of salvation in Christ. Wow! What changes took place in my whole value system and in my estimation of things! My wife, my kids, my health, my wisdom, my business, my houses, my lands, my livestock, etc., were all gifts from God! Not only that, but the value I had put upon many things faded out for the thrill of serving Christ and others.

There are doctrines being taught today that God is not involved in and doesn’t care about the material and physical things in our

lives. And, that there are some things too trivial and menial for God to be concerned about, such as: our health, employment, transportation, food, etc.

Did you know that everything the lost Athenians had were “gifts from God”? The Apostle Paul told them: “He [God] gives to **ALL** life, breath, and **ALL THINGS**” (Acts 17:25). To us who are saved we’re told: “...How shall He [God] not with Him [Christ] also **FREELY GIVE US ALL THINGS**” (Rom. 8:32). How many of “the all things” do you have that aren’t “gifts from God”? God said to the Corinthians: “...What do you have that you did not receive...” (I Cor. 4:7)?

May we not take any of God’s gifts for granted! May we “In everything give thanks...” (I Thes. 5:18), realizing that God “**GIVES US RICHLY ALL THINGS** to enjoy” (I Tim. 6:17)! We’re to even pray for our food and receive it from God with thanksgiving (I Tim. 4:4,5)! Praise the Lord for His love and care for us in giving us everything we have!

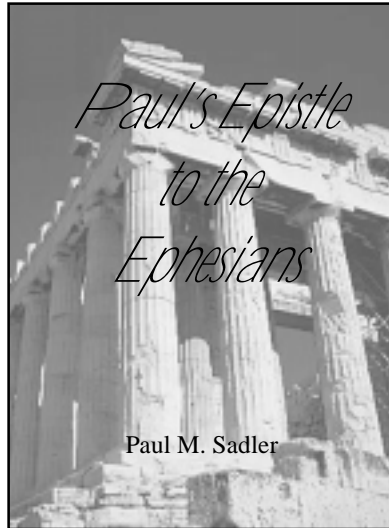
Brother Ware is the pastor of *Grace Bible Church* in Oshkosh, Wisconsin and is an instructor for the *Berean Bible Institute*.

Who will be the pastors, Bible teachers, and missionaries of tomorrow? None other than the faithful men and women who are preparing themselves for service today. For more information about Berean Bible Institute contact: Dr. W. Edward Bedore, PO Box 40, Germantown, WI 53022, or phone: (262) 255-4094, fax: (262) 255-4195, e-mail: <berean@execpc.com>.

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By Paul M. Sadler



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HOMEGOING: Our dear brother Albert Olson was called home to be with the Lord on November 30, 1999 at the age of 94. One would be hard pressed to find a saint who was more gracious and supportive than Albert. He was sold out for the gospel of the grace of God and proved the sincerity of his love by helping Pastor Stam secure the Chicago facility back in the '50's. According to II Corinthians chapter 5 he's now serving the Lord in glory. May God comfort Albert's family with the full assurance that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

THE NEW MILLENNIUM: With the holidays behind us and Y2K a passing memory, we wanted to make sure that everyone has received the following information:

Addresses: If you have a question, request, or you're simply placing an order it will only be necessary to use the following address:

Berean Bible Society
P.O. Box 756
Germantown, WI 53022

If you are sending us a *package* it will be necessary to use the street address: N112 W17761 Mequon Rd., Germantown, WI 53022.

BBI: The new address of the *Berean Bible Institute* is: P.O. Box 40, Germantown, Wisconsin 53022.

Phone numbers: The office hours of the *Berean Bible Society* and the *Berean Bible Institute* are Monday through Friday—**9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.**, Central Standard Time.

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Internet: If you haven't visited our site lately you'll in for a pleasant surprise, we can be located at: <www.bereanbiblesociety.org>. This is a quick way to place an order for books and tapes. Don't forget to sign our *Guest Registry!*

*The picture of the lighthouse that appears on the front cover was taken by Mrs. Betty France. The lighthouse is located in Kewaunee, Wisconsin.

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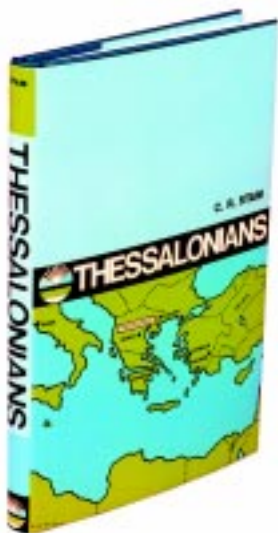
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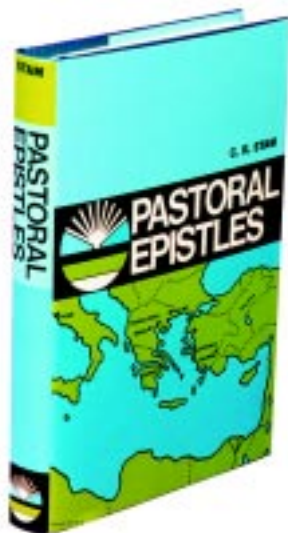
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