

The

Berean Searchlight

Studying God's Word, Rightly Divided

February 2004



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From the Editor to You:



Dearly Beloved,

With the ministries of the *Berean Bible Society* growing, it is requiring more and more man hours to keep pace. The interest in our website/book orders and responding to e-mails alone is daunting. While each of our staff is very dedicated to the particular ministry to which God has called them, there are only so many hours in the day to fulfill the tasks at hand. With this in mind, on January 5th, Pastor Ricky Kurth joined our staff full time.

Ricky will continue to handle the lion's share of our correspondence, which he has ably done for the past two years. He will also be assuming the additional responsibility of the Assistant Editor of the *Berean Searchlight*. Your Editor will continue to write articles and make other contributions throughout the year, but Ricky will begin working more closely with the production of the magazine.

The purpose of this adjustment is to give your Editor additional time to develop new literature. Trying to juggle so many responsibilities leaves little time to do the needed research, for example, to complete my commentary on *I & II Peter*. This new arrangement will ease my schedule somewhat to hopefully further the cause of Christ through the written page, which is still the most practical way to preserve the message of grace for future generations.

Since there has been so little written on *I & II Peter* in relation to the Word, rightly divided, I am methodically working my way through the letters to address as many issues as possible. I'm also highlighting those places in Peter's writings where we can glean certain truths which benefit our Christian lives today. Lord willing, I hope to complete the work before the end of the year. Until then, please **do not** place your order in advance. As soon as we know for certain when the commentary will be published, we will post an official announcement in the *Searchlight*. By the way, I want to personally thank everyone for the heartwarming response we received regarding the commentary in the November letter.

Please pray along with me for Brother Kurth as he undertakes his new responsibilities here at BBS. Pray for wisdom, strength, and boldness as he stands in defense of the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the Mystery.

In His redeeming grace,
Paul M. Sadler, President

The Answer to the Riddle



Probably most of our readers solved the riddle, but in the event it left some puzzled, the Books of the Bible are highlighted below. In all likelihood, the book that caused the most difficulty was the *Preacher*, more commonly known as Ecclesiastes. Hopefully you found the riddle an enjoyable challenge. —Ed.

SOMEONE SHOWED ME THIS STORY AND REMARKED THAT THERE ARE TWENTY BOOKS OF THE BIBLE HIDDEN HERE. HE CHALLENGED ME TO FIND THEM. SURE ENOUGH THEY'RE ALL HERE. STILL THIS THING'S A LULU, KEPT PEOPLE LOOKING SO LONG THEY GREW WEARY. SOME OF YOU WILL GET BOGGED DOWN WITH FACTS. OTHERS ARE HIT BY THEM LIKE THEY ARE SOME KIND OF REVELATION OR SOMETHING. SOME MAY GET INTO A JAM, ESPECIALLY SINCE THE WORDS OF THE RIDDLE ARE ALL CAPITALIZED. BUT THE TRUTH FINALLY STRUCK HOME TO NUMBERS OF READERS. FOR OTHERS IT WAS A REAL JOB TO FIND THEM. BUT WE WANT IT TO BE A MOST FASCINATING FEW MINUTES FOR YOU. YES, THERE ARE SOME REALLY EASY ONES TO SPOT. OTHERS MAY REQUIRE CAPABLE JUDGES TO HELP THEM.

I WILL QUICKLY ADMIT, IT USUALLY TAKES A PREACHER TO FIND ONE OF THEM AND THERE WILL BE LOUD LAMENTATIONS WHEN IT IS FOUND. ONE LADY SAYS SHE BREWS A CUP OF HERBAL TEA TO HELP HER CONCENTRATE BETTER. BUT THEN SHE'S A REAL PRO. VERBS AND NOUNS COME EASY TO HER. NOW LET'S SEE IF YOU CAN COMPETE. RELAX! THERE REALLY ARE TWENTY NAMES OF THE BIBLE IN THIS STORY. WHILE I'M WAITING FOR YOU TO SOLVE THE PUZZLE, I THINK I'LL HAVE A PIECE OF PIE—BANANA, HUM THE BATTLE HYMN OF THE REPUBLIC, AND HOSE A SIDE WALK OFF FOR MY NEIGHBOR.

Studies in the Book of Revelation

Revelation 11:3-12:10

By Paul M. Sadler

“And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.”

—Rev. 11:3,4

In John’s “Journal of Doom” he methodically records every detail that will transpire during the mid-part of the Tribulation. In fact, Chapters 10 through 14 are to be understood as a *parenthetical* section. The apostle temporarily interrupts the timeline he has been developing to describe the events of this period, which takes him the better part of five chapters to accomplish. As we are going to see, there will be a flurry of activity as people of that coming day pass over the threshold into the Great Tribulation.

We have already established that God has never left Himself without a human testimony upon the earth; therefore, two witnesses will supernaturally appear in Israel immediately after the Rapture of the Church. This means their ministry will cover the first 3½ years of the Tribulation (Rev. 11:3). According to the Great Commission, they will begin at *Jerusalem* and proclaim the good news of the kingdom (Acts 1:8 cf. Rev. 11:8).

The firstfruits of these two witnesses will be the 144,000 who are sealed of God, thus insuring their security throughout the Tribulation (Rev. 7:4 cf. 14:1-5).

A BIBLICAL SOLUTION

Who are these two witnesses? Some have suggested that one of them will be Enoch simply because he is said to have not tasted of death. Consequently, it will be necessary for him to return to experience death—as the Scriptures state: “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). While this is true, there are exceptions to the rule. For example, when the trump sounds those of us who are alive and remain will be caught up to be with the Lord without seeing death (I Cor. 15:51,52). Many centuries after Enoch’s translation, the Scriptures seem to indicate that he would *never* see death. “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death” (Heb. 11:5).

Perhaps the most conclusive evidence that one of the witnesses could not be Enoch is based upon the fact that he was a *Gentile*. That being the case would exclude him from any credible ministry in Israel. The Gentiles, in the mind of a Jew, are dogs regardless of

the age in which they live. Even believing Gentiles were looked upon as second class citizens of the kingdom.

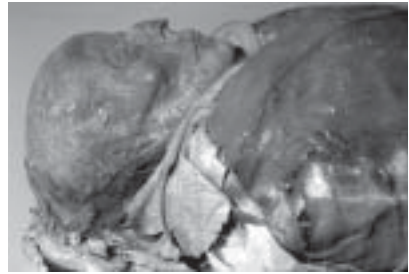
Although we are unable to speak definitively, the Holy Spirit does give us reason to believe the two witnesses will be Moses and Elijah. This conclusion is derived from a number of biblical references. Both Moses and Elijah were highly revered in Israel and their *reappearance* would be the type of catalyst needed to initiate the Great Commission. Moses represents the Law, and Elijah the prophets, which is all encompassing. Regarding the two witnesses, John says, "These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth" (Rev. 11:4). There are very few who are said to stand before the Lord in the Scriptures, two of whom are Moses and Elijah:

Elijah: "As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word" (I Kings 17:1).

Moses: "Therefore He said that He would destroy them, had not Moses His chosen stood before Him in the breach, to turn away His wrath, lest he should destroy them" (Psa. 106:23).

In addition, both of their departures were associated with *unusual* circumstances. When Moses died God commissioned the Archangel Michael to bury his body in a valley in the land of Moab. Apparently the Devil was observing all of this because he contended with Michael over the body of Moses (Deut. 34:5,6 cf. Jude 9). Undoubtedly, the Devil wanted to enshrine the body so Israel would

worship it, thus robbing God of the worship that was rightfully due Him. With the embalming procedures of that period this could have easily been accomplished. The mummified remains of Seti I and other pharaohs that have been preserved to this day serve as reminders of the possibility (See Gen. 50:1-6).



In the case of Elijah, a chariot of fire and horses of fire swept him into heaven in the presence of Elisha (II Kings 2:11,12). The death and departure of the two witnesses is also unusual and mirrors that of Moses and Elijah (Rev. 11:7-12). It should further be noted that Elijah is to return during the coming day of the Lord and Moses is mentioned in the same narrative. Finally, they appear together at the Mount of Transfiguration in the context of the Second Coming and kingdom (Mal. 4:1-6 cf. Luke 9:27-35).

"These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will" (Rev. 11:6).

Interestingly, the miracles that the two witnesses will perform in that day are identical to those performed by Moses and Elijah—Moses turned the water into blood,

which struck fear into the heart of the Egyptians. And the plagues that followed were but an eerie foreshadowing of things to come. The future plagues of the Tribulation, however, will be on a much grander scale. Elijah, of course, was the one that called fire down from heaven in the presence of his adversaries. Because the two witnesses will pronounce these judgments upon the enemies of God, they will be utterly despised by the unbelieving, as Moses and Elijah were in the days of their prophecies.

In the middle of the Tribulation the Anti-Christ has the two witnesses slain. He will leave their bodies lay in the streets of Jerusalem for 3½ days so believers can witness the fate of those who oppose him. The 3½ days are representative of the 3½ years of the two witnesses' testimony. This not only shows contempt for their ministry, but the world's hatred of them, since in the Middle East they normally bury their dead the same day. As the two witnesses lie in the street, it will evidently be viewed via satellite around the globe as the world celebrates their death (Rev. 11:7-11).

This kindles the anger of the Lord that results in the pronouncement of the second woe of the Tribulation. After the two witnesses are raised back to life and ascend into heaven in the sight of their enemies, a great earthquake destroys a tenth part of the city of Jerusalem and seven thousand souls perish in the judgment. Today God is speaking to the world in *grace*, but in the coming day of the Lord He will speak to the world in *judgment* (Psa. 2:5-12 cf.

Rev. 11:13,14). Interestingly, the three woes of the Tribulation all transpire around the middle of Jacob's Trouble. Thus, "the second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly."

A WONDER IN HEAVEN

"And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered" (Rev. 12:1,2).

This particular portion of Scripture is another good example of how the best commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself. As the Apostle John continues to develop the themes that take place during the middle of the Tribulation, he now marks a critical turning point. In fact, the events of this chapter help us to understand why the remaining 3½ years of Jacob's Trouble are called the *Great Tribulation*.

As the world prepares to enter the latter part of the Tribulation, John beheld "a great wonder in heaven" (Rev. 12:1). The term "wonder" here is the Greek word *semeion* or sign. In that day, the Lord will again speak to Israel in signs, miracles, and wonders. With the heavens playing such a key role in future prophecy, there seems to be little doubt that this *sign* will literally appear in heaven. Historically this would not be the first time that God used the heavens to make known the counsel of His will (Psa. 19:1-4).

Perhaps the most common interpretation of the text goes something like this: The woman is the

Virgin Mary; the child to whom she's about to give birth to is the Christ child; and the dragon is Herod, who sought the young child's life. Although this is a plausible interpretation of the sign it seems to fall short of the intended meaning, for the following reason. The birth of Christ is already a well-documented historical fact both scripturally and secularly. What possible purpose could be attached to announcing an event that took place centuries earlier? While Christ is presented as the babe destined to become the Savior of Israel in Luke's gospel, here in the Book of Revelation He is clearly portrayed as the resurrected, ascended, Judge of all the earth.

We believe there is a more suitable explanation found in prophecy. With the Scriptures as our guide, clearly the *woman* is Israel. This is an undeniable fact of the prophetic program (Isa. 54:5,6). John substantiates this with the reference to her being "clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." We understand from the Book of Genesis that the *sun* is Jacob, the *moon* his wife Rachel, and the *twelve stars* the twelve sons of Israel from whom came the twelve tribes of Israel. When Joseph dreamed that there would come a time that his family would bow down before him, his father was troubled by the saying but he observed it, as a message from God.

"And he [Joseph] dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance [bow

down, homage] to me. And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I [Jacob—Israel] and thy mother [Rachel] and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying" (Gen. 37:9-11).

As the delivery date is approaching for the woman to have her child, *another* ominous sign appears in heaven. "Behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth" (Rev. 12:3,4). The great red dragon that stands before Israel prepared to devour her child is that old serpent called the Devil (vs. 9). The significance of the seven heads, ten horns, and the seven crowns will be addressed in a future lesson.

The tail of the dragon is said to draw a third part of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. When we think of *stars* it is usually in the context of heavenly bodies that grace the night sky. But the term "stars" is also another name for angelic beings. In the Book of Job, God asked the patriarch a poignant question: "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?" Obviously no man was present, including Job. The Lord then adds an interesting statement: "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38:4,7). Although man was not yet a product of God's handiwork, the angels were, and bore witness

to the creation of the heavens and earth. We should note that these angels are called “stars.”

Sometime after Genesis 1:31 Lucifer sinned against God and was cast out of His presence into the second heaven, along with those angels who followed him in the rebellion. John reveals that this amounted to *one-third* of the angelic host originally created by God. He, of course, knows the

exact number of angels He created in the beginning, thus the one-third who defected with Lucifer is based on this observation. Humanly speaking, the angels of God are *innumerable*. We seriously doubt that even the fallen angels that the Devil is seen preparing for war can be numbered. But what war looms on the horizon, and who is the child of the sign?

To Be Continued!



Question Box

“Some seem to think the ‘last trump’ taught by the Apostle Paul is the ‘seventh trumpet’ foretold by John in the Book of Revelation. What is your position on this viewpoint?”

The two passages under consideration are:

“Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (I Cor. 15:51,52).

“And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound...And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 8:6 cf. 11:15).

We do not believe that Paul and John are making reference to the same trumpet, for three reasons. First and foremost, if we distinguish between the two programs of God then we must also make a distinction between the “last trump” of the Mystery and the “seventh trumpet” of Prophecy. Failure to do so only serves to confuse these two programs. Second, these two trumpets are tied to unrelated events. The “last trump” is associated with the catching away of the Body of Christ while the “seventh trumpet” is the reclaiming of the kingdoms of this world that rightfully belong to God. Third, we must distinguish between last in a *point of time* and last in a *sequence*. The “last trump” sounded at the Rapture closes the present age of grace; therefore, it is the last in a point of time. On the other hand, the sounding of the seventh trumpet is the “last trumpet” in a sequence from which the seven bowl judgments are poured out.

—Pastor Sadler

CHRISTIAN HERITAGE TOUR

Tour England and Scotland
with the Berean Bible Society

September 9-20, 2004

The purpose of this tour is to encourage those who have come to rejoice in the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the Mystery and to explore our rich Christian heritage!



Inverary Castle, Scotland

Guest Speaker:

Paul M. Sadler
President of the
Berean Bible Society

We will be visiting the home of John Knox and John Wesley, Bede's Museum, Gainsborough Old Hall, the meeting place of the Pilgrims, Parish Church of Lutterworth where John Wycliffe, "the Morning Star of the Reformation," spent the last years of his life, Oxford, Westminster Abbey, the Tower of London, and much, much more!

For a brochure or additional information, please contact the *Berean Bible Society* at: P.O. Box 756, Germantown, WI 53022, or phone: (262) 255-4750, or e-mail: berean@execpc.com.

Dr. Henry Hudson has graciously agreed to be our tour guide. Brother Hudson has had a wide and varied career: born in England, served in the British Royal Military Police, missionary, pastor, and college professor. He is an experienced traveler, and has led many tours to Great Britain and Europe. If you have any questions about the tour, Dr. Hudson can be reached at: 850 Brook Village Drive, Holland, Michigan 49423, or phone: (616) 403-1438, or e-mail: drhth@juno.com.



"Big Ben"—London, England

Grace Abounding

(Grace—Part V)

By Cornelius R. Stam

“But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”

—Rom. 5:20

It is amazing that God should still send forth a message of grace in a world where His Word and will are increasingly despised. The increasing sinfulness of this age, of course, only emphasizes the true character of grace, for grace is “the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man,” *wholly regardless of either “good” or evil works.*

It is interesting to note that while the Gospels and the Acts take up twice as much space in our Bible as the epistles of St. Paul, yet the word “grace” in the original appears only 27 times in the Gospels and the Acts while it is used 107 times in the Pauline epistles. Furthermore, *only a few times* in the Gospels and the Acts is the *doctrine* of grace referred to, while in the epistles of Paul *almost every reference* to grace has to do with the *doctrine* of God’s favor to undeserving sinners.

“Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,” but it was not fully manifested until God cast aside all distinctions between Jew and Gentile and sent the Apostle Paul with the glorious message of the unsearchable riches of Christ.

“*Salvation is of the Jews,*” said our Lord to the woman at the well (John 4:22). At Pentecost Peter reaffirmed this when he said to

“the house of Israel,” *“For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all [“of your children” according to Dan. 9:7] that are afar off.”*

But Ephesians 2:14-16 tells us that God has now *“broken down the middle wall of partition between us...that He might reconcile BOTH unto God in one Body by the Cross.”* During this age of grace there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile. *“God hath concluded them all in unbelief that He might have mercy upon all”* (Rom. 11:32). At one time the worship and Word of God were committed to Israel, but today Israel is as far from God as the Gentiles. BOTH need to be reconciled. *“There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him”* (Rom. 10:12). *“God hath concluded them all in unbelief that He might have mercy upon all.”* This is boundless, impartial grace! When God set aside Israel as a nation He ushered in the dispensation of Grace. We must always be careful to distinguish between grace in a dispensation, and the dispensation of Grace.

“The dispensation of the grace of God,” did not begin when Christ was on earth, nor yet at Pentecost. The first chapters of Acts will be searched in vain for a reference to it. It was to Paul that this glorious message was committed (Eph. 3:2).

The careful student of the Word will be thrilled to note how often the references to “grace” in the Pauline epistles are coupled with words such as “free,” “abundant,” “exceeding,” “rich,” “sufficient.” It is thus that God would emphasize the fulness of His loving provision for sinner and saint. Let us examine some of these Scriptures.

GRACE ABOUNDING TO THE LOST

See Romans 5:15, “Not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, *much more* the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, *hath abounded unto many.*” “*Not as...so.*” Sin spread like a germ from one to all, but not so grace. Here we find the abundance at the beginning. *He is “full of grace,”* and at the Cross He made “*all grace*” available to “*all men.*”

“But,” says some conscience-stricken sinner, “You do not know how far I have lived from God.” Very well, God knows. In fact He gave the Law to show you “the exceeding sinfulness of sin.” “More-over the law entered that the *offence* might abound.” But don’t stop reading there, for the verse goes on to say, “But where sin abounded *grace did much more abound*” (Rom. 5:20). Listen to Paul’s own testimony here:

“According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust....Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly

in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.”

“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting” (I Tim. 1:11,13-16).

You may feel that *you* are the chief of sinners, but this is not so. Not only did *Paul* say that *he* was the chief of sinners, but the *Holy Spirit* says so. And the Holy Spirit tells just why He saved Saul of Tarsus. Read Verse 16 over again thoughtfully and prayerfully. Any sinner who wonders whether God is either able or willing to save him should read Ephesians 1:7,8: “In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to *the riches of His grace*; wherein He hath *abounded* toward us in all wisdom and prudence.”

GRACE ABOUNDING TO THE SAVED

The boundless grace which can save the vilest sinner is also extended to us who *are* saved for our blessing and encouragement.

Do we need power to overcome sin? Grace, and grace alone can help us. “*For sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under law but under grace*” (Rom. 6:14).

Do we want to be used of God? “God is able to make *all grace*

abound toward you, that ye, *always* having *all* sufficiency in *all* things, may *abound* to every good work” (II Cor. 9:8).


Are we weak in body? Paul had a “thorn in the flesh” which he thrice besought the Lord to remove, but the answer came back, “*My grace is sufficient for thee;*” and Paul learned what thousands upon thousands of believers have learned from that day to this: that it is often more blessed to experience God’s grace *in* suffering than to be delivered by the Lord *from* suffering.

GRACE IN THE AGES TO COME

Some day, “in the ages to come,” God is going to display “*the exceeding riches of His grace.*”

How? “*In His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus*” (Eph. 2:7).

Friend, have you accepted the grace of God in Christ Jesus? Do you believe that He loves you and gave His beloved Son to bear all the blame and shame and punishment that was your due, so that He might justify you “*freely by His grace*” (Rom. 3:24). If you will take Him at His word He will use *you*, “in the ages to come,” to display to the universe “the exceeding riches of His grace.” We close with one of the most wonderful messages of grace to be found in all the Word of God:

“For all things are for your sakes. That the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God”
(II Cor. 4:15). 

Pastor Dennis Kizonas is the *Executive Director* of *Grace For Today*, a national radio ministry, which reaches tens of thousands with the gospel of the grace of God weekly. This coming May they will be celebrating their 20th Anniversary (see page 23). Brother Kizonas is a faithful steward of the mysteries of God, as well as a gifted teacher of the Word, so we’re sure you are going to profit from his insights on the subject of worship. —Ed.

Your Reasonable Service

How to Worship God in the Dispensation of Grace

By Pastor Dennis Kizonas

If there’s anything that characterizes heaven, it is worship. In the last book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation, we see glimpses of heaven, as John, the author, repeatedly shifts the viewpoint from heaven to earth and back to heaven again. Listen to John describe what he saw:

“Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!’”¹

—Rev. 5:11-12

The word “worship” is derived from the older word “worthship,” and means to ascribe worth to God, to consider Him as worthy of value, the ultimate value of our lives, and in some way to express to Him our sense of His worth and value to us. The angels said, “Worthy is the Lamb...to receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, blessing. These things belong to Him, and rightly so, for He is the Lamb who was slain.” Later, the “living creatures” around the throne joined in the worship by simply responding to the angels’ words with “Amen!” while the 24 elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever (Rev. 5:14).

That’s a glimpse of the worship of heaven, but how should we worship God today, here on earth? The Bible is clear that, if we want our worship to be acceptable to Him, we need to find out from Him how He wants us to worship Him. As Cain discovered early on, there is “acceptable” worship and “unacceptable” worship. This is one place where we do not write the rules.

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1).

Paul writes here about our “reasonable service.” This word “service” could just as well be translated “worship.” When we talk about going to the “morning service” of a church, or a sign in front of a church building announces, “Divine Service—Sundays 10 a.m. and 6 p.m.,” that is the idea of “service” or “worship” that Paul’s word conveys. “I beseech you to present your bodies a living sacrifice...which is your reasonable worship service.”

Israel’s Worship

This same word, “service,” is used several times in Hebrews Chapter 9:

“Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of *divine service* and the earthly sanctuary” (vs. 1).

Here Paul’s word, “service,” is translated by the fuller phrase, “divine service.” The writer to the Hebrews is describing the worship that God ordained, “the ordinances,” under the Law of Moses for the people of Israel. He begins in vs. 1 writing about the “earthly sanctuary,” referring to the tabernacle in the wilderness, and later to the temple that then stood in the center of Jerusalem, where the worship of Israel was continually carried out. He goes on to a detailed explanation of Israel’s worship:

“For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary [margin: “holy place”]; and behind the second veil, the part of the

tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, which had the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat" (vs. 2-5).

As the writer describes the worship that God commanded for Israel, he walks us through the tabernacle describing the architecture: two rooms, the holy place and the Holy of Holies, and two veils; the furniture: a table and a lampstand; certain "relics" that were preserved in the Holy of Holies: the ark of the covenant, the tablets of stone with the Ten Commandments, Aaron's rod that budded, a pot of manna.

Then he goes on to describe how these things were actually used in the worship:

"Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the *services*. But into the second part [The Holy of Holies] the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance" (Heb. 9:6-7).

Here we read about the personnel who were required in order to worship the Lord and the calendar of feasts that governed the worship. We read that the ordinary priests went into the first room, the holy place, performing the worship, but into the Holy of Holies only the High Priest went, and that on only one day of the year, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. On that day he could go into the Holy of Holies and sprinkle the blood on the ark, or mercy seat, and make atonement for the sins of the people.



If a person in Israel wanted to worship the Lord, he couldn't do it in just any way that he desired, in any place that he desired. God had prescribed the way to worship Him acceptably, and the Israelite had to obey, or be guilty of breaking the covenant. To worship the Lord he had to go to a particular city, Jerusalem, and to a certain building, the temple. He would have to be concerned about certain furniture, certain relics that had to be present, about a certain ritual, the proper sacrifices and manner of performing them. He had to be concerned about a priesthood, and the calendar, the yearly cycle of feasts and the weekly Sabbaths. Later in this same passage we read about "foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances..." (Heb. 9:10). Worship was a complex undertaking, but these were God's instructions to Israel about how He wanted them to worship Him.

It might be complicated, and it might at times be burdensome, but still, what a privilege! God said to these people that He wanted to have fellowship with them, and that He was providing an access, a way that they, through their High Priest representative, could come into His very presence and have fellowship with Him and make atonement for their sins. This fellowship was limited, only the High Priest could come, and that only once a year, but it was real, and it was unlike anything that any other people on the face of the earth enjoyed. This was the “divine service,” the worship, of Israel.

Your Reasonable Service

Now we turn back to Romans 12:1 and read what Paul writes to the members of the Body of Christ:

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.”

The twelfth chapter of Romans is full of instructions on the practical aspects of living the Christian life. It is noteworthy that the first issue that Paul deals with is the issue of “worship.” Worship, for the Gentile Christians, as for the Old Testament Israelites, has a priority in our lives.

We need to notice the dispensational emphasis of Romans 12:1. When Paul writes, “I beseech you by the mercies of God,” he’s not referring to the mercy of the Lord in general, but to the specific mercy that he has just written about in the previous chapter.

“For as you [Gentiles] were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their [Israel’s] disobedience, even so these [the Jews] also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy” (Rom. 11:30-31).

Here Paul describes the changing of the dispensations. In times past Israel had fellowship with God while the Gentiles were far off, without God and without hope in the world. Yet now, because of Israel’s disobedience, the Gentiles have obtained mercy. The Messiah had come to Israel in fulfillment of the promises made to their fathers, but the people of Israel had rejected Him and crucified Him. Still He prayed, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.” So we read in the early chapters of the Book of Acts how the Holy Spirit preached forgiveness to Israel, if they would repent and believe in their risen and ascended Messiah. But again Israel was disobedient, persecuting the apostles and Messianic believers, and finally stoning Stephen, a man filled with the Holy Spirit.

Because of Israel’s disobedience, God “cast them away” (Rom. 11:15) and raised up a new apostle, Paul, the leader of Israel’s disobedience saved by pure grace, and revealed to him a hitherto secret program,

“the dispensation of the grace of God” (Eph. 3:1-2). Because of Israel’s disobedience, mercy went to the Gentiles, but because of the mercy shown to the Gentiles, the Jew also now may receive mercy and be saved by the grace of God through faith in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God....” Paul is writing in the light of the dispensational change that the Lord had revealed to him. The Gentiles who were once far off, not allowed to enter any further than the “vestibule” of the temple, these Gentiles, saved by grace, now are invited to worship God. But note carefully how they were to worship the Lord. Not by imitating Israel’s worship, not by building a temple, not even by going to the temple in Jerusalem (it was still standing and operating when Paul wrote this letter to the Romans), but by “presenting your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable worship.”

“When we worship the Lord by presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, it’s not what we can do for Him, but what He can do in us, through us.”

There was a profound change in God’s plan for acceptable worship. It once required all those complicated requirements for acceptable worship: a temple building, with furniture and relics and a priesthood and an altar and animal sacrifices according to the calendar, but now all that is changed. God no longer has a temple building of stone and wood, but in this new dispensation of the grace of God, the temple of God is the believer’s body!

“Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you” (1 Cor. 6:19).

That is just the beginning of the changes. Today we worship God, not by going to a building (after all, we *are* God’s building), making use of certain furniture, and the appropriate personnel, and observing a certain ritual; our worship is to present our bodies a living sacrifice. When Paul writes, “which is your reasonable service,” we should underline the word “your.” Israel’s acceptable worship was there at the temple, doing the prescribed ritual, but Paul writes, “YOUR worship, the worship God had commanded from you Gentiles, you members of the Body of Christ, YOUR worship is to present your bodies as a living sacrifice.”

“Back to Jerusalem”

The problem is that through the centuries the church has ignored Romans 12:1 and tried to go “back to Jerusalem” to worship the Lord.

Even when God showed the change in the dispensations and allowed the old temple to be destroyed, Christendom built imitation temples with altars and railings and even a little box called “the tabernacle” where, supposedly, God lived. Some of the most beautiful architecture in western civilization was built for the express purpose of worshiping God with special furniture, and relics, and rituals, and a priesthood, and calendars of holy days and seasons. Even many “Bible believing Christians” have not escaped the error of this wrong worship with their “sanctuaries” and “morning and evening worship services,” rituals, and holy days and holy seasons.

It has a certain appeal. The author once went to an “open house” at the local Catholic Church. After a complete tour of the church building, we ended up in front of the main altar. The ceiling soared above our heads, we stood on slabs of white marble, before us was arrayed a retinue of the “saints” statues, with contrasting marble columns, and gold accents and candles; it was all very impressive. One person in our tour group then asked the priest, a young man fresh out of the seminary, “Why do you do this? Why all this gold and marble and extravagance of architecture?”

The young priest was quite candid as he responded, “We do this to give people a sense of awe, to give them the feeling of coming into the presence of God. It’s special when you walk through the doors into this building. It’s like a little corner of heaven. It’s psychological.”



And, we might add, it’s quite effective! But is it “acceptable?”

Paul knew of a temple that would make that church building pale in comparison, but he wrote to the Gentile believers in the dispensation of the grace of God, “Brethren, that’s not *your* worship, *your* worship is simply to present your bodies a living sacrifice.”

Our worship today is not to go to a certain building, on a certain day of the week or certain holy days of the year. It is not to practice a certain ritual. For God’s “earthly people” Israel that was appropriate, but God has set His “heavenly people” free from that kind of worship. We can worship God at any time and in any place. We can worship Him continually, not just once in a while. We don’t need a priesthood or a building or a special day. Our worship service is not just one hour on Sunday morning, but a life. 24 hours a day; 365 days a year! Whether we’re sitting in the church building or walking down the street, driving our car or washing the dishes, putting on our shoes in the morning or setting our alarm clock at bedtime, at any time in any place, in fact at every time and every place we can worship the Lord.



“Lord, I thank You that You have saved me. That You bought me with Your blood and I am Yours. Lord, I want to give myself to You, to live for You.”

Living in the Name of the Lord

Paul wrote about worship to the Colossians:

“Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Col. 3:17).

“Whatever you do in word or deed...” What does that leave out? This verse encompasses our entire activity. Paul writes, everything you do, do it all in the name of the Lord. We know about praying “in the name of the Lord,” but now we’re instructed to do everything in the name of the Lord, so that all of life becomes a prayer. God has designed our worship to go on continually, not just at one hour on Sunday mornings. All of life can be a prayer of thanks to God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ, all of life can be a worship service for the believer living in the dispensation of Grace. In the “dispensation of the grace of God” (Eph. 3:2) there are no sacred days or seasons, because every day is the “Lord’s day” (Rom. 14:5-6), and we need no sanctuary for we *are* the sanctuary, “Christ liveth in me”! (Gal. 2:20).

A Living Sacrifice

It was easy to go to the “worship service” at the church to worship God for one hour each week, but the worship that God says is acceptable today requires nothing less than a total commitment. To present anything as a “sacrifice” means that we put it on the altar and leave it there (of course, the trouble with a living sacrifice is that the victim keeps trying to crawl off the altar. It requires constant vigilance). Now Paul tells us to present our own *bodies*, yet, in spite of the cost

involved, Paul calls this sacrifice our “reasonable” service. It’s reasonable, not exorbitant, or excessive.

“You are not your own...for you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

To present ourselves to God is only to yield to Him what is His already. When the Lord Jesus Christ died on the Cross for our sins, not only did He pay for our sins, but He paid for us. He “redeemed us from every lawless deed,” but He also “purified for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14). From the moment that we were saved, we have belonged to the Lord, forever. Considering the fact that He died for us, that He gave Himself as the sacrifice for our sins, why should it be thought unusual, or excessive now to thank Him by putting our lives on the altar as a living sacrifice, why should it be thought unusual, or excessive now to thank Him by putting our lives on the altar as a living sacrifice to worship the Lord. What more could He do to demonstrate His love for us, what less can we do to say, “Thank you Lord for saving my soul”?

“And He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again” (2 Cor. 5:15).

A Christian singer says in her song that she wants “to use the very voice He gave to praise Him thankfully.” Acceptable worship takes that principle and applies it to every aspect of life. What do we have that we haven’t received? Paul writes, brethren, I beseech you to present your bodies a living sacrifice; it is not excessive or beyond the bounds of what’s right, it is not too much, it is only your *reasonable* worship.

A Living Sacrifice

The Old Testament sacrifices were dead sacrifices, but there’s no need for blood dripping down the sides of an altar today, the Cross paid it all. Now Paul writes about a new idea, a “living” sacrifice. Paul had written about this kind of worship earlier in the letter to the Romans:

“Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life....present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God” (Rom. 6:4,13).

Paul writes that we should present ourselves to God as those who are “alive from the dead,” a “living” sacrifice. Note that the life is not merely our mortal, human life, but the life of those who are alive from the dead. It is resurrection life. An unsaved person cannot worship God, for all he could present would be a dead sacrifice, but Paul says

that we who have been baptized into Christ by the Holy Spirit should walk in newness of life, just as Christ was raised from the dead. That's the life of the living sacrifice. It is the life of one who has been to the Cross, and there found forgiveness for sins and been raised with Christ into newness of life. Now it's "not I, but Christ liveth in me." When we worship the Lord by presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, it's not what we can do for Him, but what He can do in us, through us. The worship is holy and acceptable unto God because it is the worship of His Son living in us. It is "worshiping God in the Spirit" (Phil. 3:3).

The Perfect Worshipper

We sometimes don't realize that when the Lord Jesus Christ died on the Cross, not only did He pay the debt of our sins, but He was also offering a sacrifice to God. The Cross was His altar, His death was His worship.

"Therefore be followers of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma" (Eph. 5:1-2).

Because He loved us, He gave Himself to God. That's worship. He gave Himself to God as an offering, a sacrifice, a sweet-smelling aroma. The perfect Man with perfect obedience made the perfect sacrifice, and God says that to Him it was a sweet-smelling aroma. God was pleased forever. That's worship, and we can learn from Him how to worship. In fact, Paul writes, take Him for your example, "Be followers [literally: imitators] of God and walk in love." Here is the ultimate example of worship, here is our pattern.

Just as the Lord Jesus Christ loved us, and gave Himself to God as a sacrifice, just as He worshiped God, so now we also. He did it because He loved us, He gave Himself as a sacrifice to God for us. Now Paul writes to those who know the Lord and says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren...present your bodies to God as a living sacrifice."

Now as we follow the Lord Jesus Christ because of love, we present ourselves to God as a living sacrifice for others. We walk in love as He walked in love and gave Himself to God for us. And that sweet-smelling aroma of Christ living in us, and loving through us by the power of the Holy Spirit, rises up in clouds of worship to God. And He says it is sweet-smelling, it is holy and acceptable, and isn't that the perfect reward for the worshipper? Just to know that He is pleased.

Getting our Terminology Straight

If we're committed to learning how to worship the Lord in an acceptable way, we'll begin by getting a clear understanding of what the Lord desires. Many of the common expressions that Christians use betray our lack of understanding regarding acceptable worship.

We so often hear brethren talking about “going to church,” and by that they mean going to a building. They set aside “the Lord’s day” to go to “God’s house,” and there they hold “worship services” in the “sanctuary.” All of these expressions show that we have not yet left Jerusalem and grasped the new revelation that the Lord Jesus Christ gave to the Apostle Paul for us today. In the dispensation of the grace of God, *we* are the church, God’s house, His temple, His sanctuary. Every day is the Lord’s day, and our worship service is not just one hour on Sunday morning, but ought to be a “living sacrifice” every day of our lives.



When the church comes together in one place, if it’s not for worship, what is the purpose? Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 14:26 that when the church comes together, “Let all things be done for edification.” The church does not meet for worship—for our worship is to apply Romans 12:1—but for the purpose of building up one another so that the members can go back to their homes, jobs, and schools, and worship the Lord there all week long. (Of course, an aspect of “presenting our bodies a living sacrifice” is to be present and participate in the meetings of the church for the edifying of the fellow members of the Body of Christ.)

He Is Worthy

As we have seen, acceptable worship in the dispensation of Grace is not the emotional experience of a person seated in a great “sanctuary” observing a ritual. Worship is not limited to a certain time, day or place, but is the constant opportunity of the believer. Every area of life and every activity of life becomes the worship service of the believer.

“Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord” (Col. 3:23).

The worship of heaven sounds the refrain constantly:

“You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power” (Rev. 4:11).

“Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!” (Rev. 5:13).

“Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen” (Rev. 7:12).

Our worship today has the same goal, the “glory of God”:


“To whom [God and our Father] be glory forever and ever. Amen” (Gal. 1:5).

But note *how* we glorify God:

“That you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 15:6).

“Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:20).

“Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31).

Those glorious songs of praise in heaven’s worship today are sung not only by our voices, but by our lives, by our minds, mouths, bodies and spirits—in fact, by “whatever you do.” 

Endnote

1. All references have been taken from the *New King James Version*.

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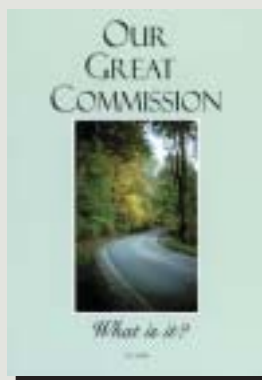
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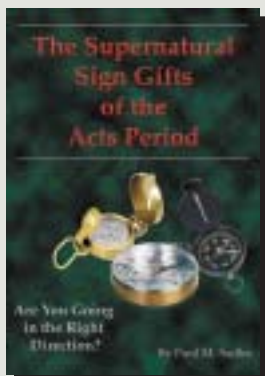
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From the Internet:

“I am very thankful for your *Two Minute Bible Studies*. They have taught me a lot. I am a fairly new Christian trying to learn all I can.”

From Rhode Island:

“I have read your salvation tract, *Rescued by the Blood*; it ministered to me although I have heard it before. I am always learning and was blessed by it. The truth! Thank you so much!”

From Tennessee:

“Please send me a copy of Pastor Stam’s *Memoirs*. What a precious man he was and how blessed I was to know him. I thank God for Pastor Sadler and all the others who are involved in this wonderful ministry as you strive to make all men see the fellowship of the Mystery.”

From Virginia:

“I had never understood the difference between Peter and Paul, the Messianic kingdom and the heavenly kingdom, the kingdom gospel and the gospel of grace so clearly! So many of the Lord’s parables had been hard for me to grasp without contradictions, but now things are getting easier to understand. Had I never been able to read the *Fundamentals of Dispensationalism* [TTD] my study of the Bible may have continued to be mostly superficial.” (The sacrificial giving of dear saints around the country is what makes an excerpt like this possible. Heartfelt thanks! Ed.)

From the Internet:

“It has been about 5 years that I’ve been growing as a Berean in the Mystery and taking our ‘marching orders’ from the Apostle Paul, etc. I have been so thrilled by it all.”

“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

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THE BBI BYLINE

Paul's Gospel

Romans 16:25

By W. Edward Bedore, Th.D.

Executive Director, *Berean Bible Institute*

“Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began” (Rom. 16:25).

The gospel (good news) that Paul refers to as **“my gospel”** is not a gospel about Paul, but a gospel given to Paul from heaven by the resurrected, ascended, glorified, and highly exalted Lord Jesus Christ Himself (see Galatians 1:11-12; Ephesians 3:1-7). To acknowledge that Paul received special revelation that had never been revealed to anyone before in no way contradicts the Bible or minimizes the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, just the opposite is true.

To accept the plainly stated fact that Paul was chosen by God for the special purpose of revealing the gospel of the grace of God in

Jesus Christ to the whole of lost humanity is to agree with God. With Israel held in unbelief because of her rejection of Christ as God's Anointed King and Redeemer, Paul, the leader of the rebellion against Christ (see I Timothy 1:15-16), was saved by a special act of God's grace and sent to the Gentiles (nations).

Paul's God-given message of hope declared that God's never before revealed program, the Dispensation of Grace, was now in effect. The Kingdom program of Israel as foretold (prophesied) in the Old Testament was at the same time put on hold until God's purpose for the Body of Christ is fulfilled. The blueprint for this present Dispensation of Grace that we live in today is found only in that portion of God-inspired Scripture given to Paul, God's apostle to the Gentiles.

Practical Living Charts

Berean Bible Institute has produced 2 charts entitled: “The Two-Fold Application of God's Grace in the Believer's Life” and “Living Grace Day-By-Day.”

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NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

USED LITERATURE: We receive regular requests for free books from prisoners (who have no money) and from people—even pastors—in 3rd world countries where poverty is rampant. Many of these requests are from sincere believers whom we help as we are able. If you would like to donate your used BBS books to the *Berean Bible Society*, you will enable us to meet more of these needs. These works will be going to people eager to receive them. Any help you can give us with postage to send this literature across the “pond” would be greatly appreciated!

STRANGE, BUT TRUE: Someone is attempting to sell a copy of *The Historical Beginning of the Church* by your Editor for \$193.14 on the web at: www.amazon.com. We have contacted the party and Amazon to correct this glaring mistake, but to no avail. The booklet is listed as “Out of Print,” with “Limited Availability,” which is untrue. Copies of *The Historical Beginning of the Church* are available through the *Berean Bible Society* for \$4.00 each, plus postage and handling.

HOMEGOINGS: Pastor Denny Walters of the *Grace Fellowship Chapel* in Evansville, Indiana unexpectedly suffered a massive stroke this past November while preparing a message in his study. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the assembly and his family. As we know, God is the Father of all mercies and the God of all comfort.

Oscar Potter was also promoted to glory late last year at the age of 80. Oscar was a fixture here in Milwaukee as he labored under Pastors Baker, Stam, and your Editor. He went about his work quietly, but was instrumental in leading many, many souls to Christ. In fact, he led Sam Castrova to the Lord, the Director of our *Tape Lending Library*. May God comfort Louise and the family in their loss.

NEW SERIES: Brother Castrova has added three new sets of messages from your Editor’s Conference ministry to our *Tape Lending Library*. They are: *Defending the Faith*, *Dispensational Bible Truths for Today*, and *The Fall and Casting Away of Israel*. To request a catalog or tapes from the *Lending Library*, simply write: Sam and Ruth Castrova, 7900 Barbour Store Road, Willow Springs, NC 27592. They can also be reached via e-mail at: s.castrova@att.net.

*The picture of the lighthouse that appears on the front cover comes courtesy of Pastor & Mrs. John Fredericksen of Rockerville, South Dakota. The *Yaquina Bay Lighthouse* is located in Newport, Oregon. Built in 1871, this historic wooden lighthouse is the second oldest standing lighthouse on the Oregon coast. It is 161 ft. above sea level.

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