

is to test man's work (vs.15), not to purify his soul in salvation, for 'there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus...' (Rom.8:1).

If we 'suffer loss' at this judgement we will still enjoy all the benefits of Heaven and being face to face with our Lord and Saviour. What is 'wood, hay and stubble' (worthless) is burned away by God's judgement; what is 'gold and silver' remains as worthy fruit for the Lord (1Cor.3:13-15).

However, we do NOT serve Christ with a motivation to get 'rewards'. We serve Christ because we are ambassadors for him in love. He has given us giftings, talents, abilities as blessings to serve him and for His body, the church. These 'deeds' are a joy if we work within our giftings and talents the Lord has supplied. We are not to be 'unprofitable servants' (Lk.17:7-10). We work what Christ has given us to do with rewards as consequences.

The 'crowns' - some do not believe these are 'rewards' as such, but are speaking of salvation and all facets of the same thing and for all Christians. The 'incorruptible crown' is a crown of self-denial and discipline in 'running' and 'fighting' the war of the flesh versus spirit (1Cor.9:24-27; Rom.7:23). The 'prize' mentioned here is the rewards in Heaven. The 'crown of joy' (1Thess.2:19) is received when in his presence at his coming. The 'Crown of Righteousness' (2Tim.4:8) is doing right in 'loving his appearance', having 'fought a good fight', 'finished the course' and 'kept the faith'. Many believe this is for all because the righteousness is imputed to all true believers. The 'Crown of Glory' (1Pet.5:4) is for undershepherds. The 'Crown of Life' (James 1:12) is for enduring life's trials.

God gives us 'works' which he has 'before ordained' (Eph.2:10) and then rewards us for those good works. We are to 'run in a race...receive the prize. So run, that ye may obtain...strive for the mastery...so run, not as uncertainly; so fight...keep under my body, and bring it into subjection...' (1Cor.9:24-27).

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'But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern [diakrisis] both good and evil', (Heb.5:14)

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TA Ministries is a non-denominational faith ministry,
teaching, informing and equipping the church.
Editor: Terry Arnold (Dr.Th; MABS; Dip.Bib.&Min.)

The editor may not necessarily agree with all the views expressed by subscribers in this newsletter.

We welcome comments or items contributed by readers. Unless otherwise requested, these may be included in following newsletters at the discretion of the editor.

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This newsletter is distributed bi-monthly free of charge. The cost to this ministry is approximately \$20.00 per subscriber annually. Any donation to help with these expenses is received with gratitude.

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New Questionnaires

In the 'All Resources' section of our website we are now adding more 'Questionnaires'.

We currently have three pdf documents - 'What Do You Know About Justification?'; 'What Do You Know About Tongues?' and 'What Do You Know About Calvinism and Arminianism?'. The questionnaires come with answer sections.

Distribution is encouraged!

Editor's Comment

The ministry of *Diakrisis Australia* has now been in print for 25 years (since 1996). We have gone from a mailing list of less than 50 to thousands, the full number not known due to many now able to read the newsletter electronically or from other sources. (We still have a sizeable free hardcopy count of which we are thankful to those who support the costs).

The newsletter is still a teaching discernment ministry and still with the original mandate to 'Inform, Teach and Equip'. It started out in early issues exposing and warning of new divisive movements such as the 'Toronto Blessing' and various false 'revivals'. The Pentecostal/Charismatic movement with its roots of extra-biblical teachings and prophecies increasingly took on the new gospels of healing and prosperity. There was much to expose and warn of.

A decade further and after pastoring and more travelling, the editor has seen many churches now morph into social entities, more concerned with the felt needs of the community than the Gospel that saves souls from a fiery eternity. In too many churches sermons have become shallow homilies of mens ideas rather than expository preaching of any depth.

One of the great concerns for this editor is also Christians 'reading in' to their Bibles doctrines of men. The increasing influence of social media and the Internet has also affected what people believe about certain doctrines. An example of this is the misinformation and misrepresentation of some doctrines because of terminology misused. Words like 'Calvinism' and 'Arminianism' are shockingly misrepresented and misunderstood and by authors who should know better. Many churches have statements on these that show a complete lack of understanding of the 'Doctrines of Grace' to which most of the great divines and evangelists of old adhered to, doctrines that saw revivals and awakenings that shook nations.

But currently the one area of most importance to the editor is the loss of the true Gospel in Gospel presentations. Humanistic and man made ideas have fast infiltrated the Gospel. Gospel presentations and tracts today too often are about what man can do by way of decision instead of what Christ has done in sacrifice. This has reaped a huge harvest of those who fall away and fill churches with carnality and those who believe 'in vain' (1Cor.15:2,14; 2Cor.6:1; James 1:26).

It is shocking enough that new teachings and false gospels of healing, prosperity and social concerns are commonplace, but there is 'another gospel' that some of our readers and the modern church today are deceived by. We have addressed it in some issues and it has generated the ire of some readers. But we urge the reader to be a Berean and test what follows here...

Why is it that so many Gospel presentations and tracts use *terms* foreign to the Bible? Here are some examples the editor has seen in recent books and tracts: The unsaved reader is asked to 'open your heart'. But how can an unsaved person do that when he is 'dead in sins' (Eph.2:1,5; Col.2:13) and his heart is 'deceitfully wicked' (Jer.17:9)? Why do we ask them to do something scripture says they cannot do? One booklet says 'give God a chance' because he is 'knocking at your door' and 'offering to rescue you'. But where is this in scripture? Receiving the

Your Comments and Questions

(Views expressed here are not necessarily those of the editor)

Dear Terry,

...I thank God for leading me to your website and hope you can help me with this question...IF our salvation is not up to us, entirely up to God (ie predestination Rom.8:28-30; Eph.2:1...Acts 13:48 '...as many as were 'ordained' to eternal life believed...). If our own righteousness...good works are as filthy rags (Rom.3:10) and we cannot produce Godly fruit apart from the Holy Spirit (Jn.15:5)...without the Spirit...we can only display the 'works of the flesh'...(Gal.5:19, 21)...The Parable of the Sower proves the seed cannot bear fruit unless (Matt.13:23) it was sown on 'good ground' (ie he who 'understands' - Rom.3:11; 1Cor.2:14)...made fertile by God, who then produces the fruit...ONLY the Holy Spirit gives us the ability to bear fruit? ...God is the potter, we the clay, ONLY God determines our measure of faith apportioned to us (Rom.9:15-24; 12:3)...apart from Him (Jn.15:5) we can apparently do nothing?

THEN how do I interpret 2Cor.5:9-10? 'we labour, that...we may be accepted of him...we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body...whether...good or bad'. Why are we encouraged (in our efforts) to 'run the race' (1Cor.9:24; 2Tim.4:7) to achieve...crowns? ...Does this mean the criminal on the cross (Lk.23:39-43) will not shine (Dan.12:3)...when he would die in hours? ...I feel great distress wanting to please Jesus, but question if my own efforts...are 'works of the flesh' if I strive outside of God's leading and His apportioned talents...Have I missed something?

(C.C., Qld)

Editor's Reply (excerpts):

It is important here to *separate Justification from Sanctification*. Justification is God's righteousness imputed to us upon belief because of sin being paid for in a sacrificial atonement. We can do or add nothing more to that. But Sanctification then is the work of the Spirit within to conform us to Christ, separating us from the power of sin resident in the flesh. In this Sanctification *we are co-workers* and we do 'work out' the salvation given in Justification (Phil.2:12,13). The tenses with Justification are always *passive* on man's part; but in Sanctification it is often both - God and man 'working'.

The '*Judgment Seat of Christ*' is not related to sin or salvation from the penalty of sin, but rather to the '*deeds done in the body*' whether 'good' (worthy) or 'bad' (worthless 'deeds') (2Cor.5:10).

The Greek word '*judgement seat*' is '*bema*'. During the Greek 'Olympics' the judge would sit on the 'Bema Seat' at the finish line to determine who won the gold, silver, bronze and thereafter. The ones judged are those who finish the race and cross the finishing line - *believers only*. At the Bema seat Christ rewards *worthy deeds*. There will be no rewards (yet no punishment) for unworthy deeds. But '*if any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire*' (1Cor.3:15). The '*fire*' here

Your Comments and Questions

(Views expressed here are not necessarily those of the editor)

Max Lucado

Blessings Terry...Have you got any information on Max Lucado? It is my understanding that he is not sound...Love in Christ Jesus...

(R.B., NSW)

Editor's Reply:

A 'Diakrisis' PDF search will locate several mentions of Max Lucado over the years. He may have had some worthy material in early years but He was increasingly ecumenical...which has always been a 'dividing line' for me (see 'Articles' and 'Ecumenism' on our website).

As far back as 1996 at 'Promise Keepers' conferences Max Lucado was pleading for participants to be neither Protestant nor Catholic and to apologise to any other group that they might have spoken against. In 1997 (4/10) at a Promise Keepers gathering which included thousands of Roman Catholics, he called all to come together in unity and 'repent of our sectarianism'. He led the prayer for a united world church. He was followed by Promise Keepers board member, Catholic, Mike Timmis.

Lucado was a signer of the 1997 'The Gift of Salvation' agreement (also known as 'Evangelicals and Catholics Together II') between Evangelicals and Catholics, a document full of errors and misrepresentations. (See early 'Diakrisis' articles).

Lucado once had thousands of men shout the names of their denominations all together. The result was confusion. Lucado then had them state who was the Messiah. 'Jesus' was heard plainly, the goal being to show the beauty and simplicity of ecumenical 'unity'. He stated: 'The step to unity is acceptance and no longer to speak evil of one another. Would it not be wonderful not to be known as either Protestant or Catholic? This is a God-sized dream and no one in our generation has ever seen the Church united'.

But this is not a God-sized dream; it is the vision of the religious Harlot that John described in Revelation 17.

Lucado supports 'contemplative prayer' with the publication of 'Cure for the Common Life' in which he promotes the Buddhist-Catholic monk Thomas Merton who taught pantheism and universalism. Lucado also quotes New Age mystic Martin Buber's 'The Way of Man' and Catholic 'saint' Thomas Aquinas, and Richard Foster, the most prominent Catholic mystic today.

More recently, when John MacArthur called out Beth Moore as a woman preacher, Max Lucado, completely missing the doctrine, stated he was 'grieved' over MacArthur's 'derisive' comments, adding: 'Are we, white, male, aged leaders of the church, listening? Are we heeding the message of our sisters in Christ?' (Jan/Feb 2020).

Lucado's teaching is as a chameleon displaying the fashions of the age.

Gospel is not about 'chance' and it is nowhere 'offered'. It is a proclamation of what Christ has done, nothing about us giving anything or about any 'chance'! Another publication says 'your heart longs to be loved and accepted by him...he is waiting for you to come to him personally...he longs for you to have the free gift'. This is a false gospel and a portrayal of an impotent god! The scriptures teach the opposite! Unsaved man is not seeking God, has no desire to be accepted by God, cannot understand, unless 'drawn' (Jn.6:44) and 'quicken' by the Spirit who uses the Word of God (Ps.119:50,93; Eph.2:1-5; Col.2:13).

Today Gospel messages often replace the word 'sin' and 'sinner' with 'bad', 'broken', 'messed up'. Do we dumb God's words down to be more acceptable to sinful man? Evangelism today is fast making deals with man to get a response - a 'decision'. One publication, after telling people we can do nothing, then tells them to do something - to 'decide...ask Jesus into your heart'. This decisional gospel is false! The Gospel is not about us 'deciding' for Jesus! It's about what Christ has done. Our response is not to make a 'decision' but to believe.

If a gospel presentation emphasises a decision, it is false. Again, unsaved man cannot decide unless drawn, quickened by the Spirit. Getting a 'decision' by presenting a 'choice' is a false gospel and is why we have an 80-90% fall away rate today and churches full of people who think they are Christians but with no power to change. It is not about deciding, it is about understanding we are sinners and that God has sent Jesus to satisfy himself for our sins with a substitutionary sacrifice. There is no 'offer' here, just a call to believe, to call upon the Lord for salvation, receive Jesus Christ, believing in Him and his sacrifice on our behalf.

But this false gospel gets worse when we get a 'decision' and then, as the author has seen in so many presentations, tell them they are definitely 'saved'! Their salvation is thus based on that one 'decision'! Do we not then play the role of the Holy Spirit in this? In one booklet it is stated: 'This decision will affect your eternity...You must choose'. Then upon the decision there is the 'congratulations, you are saved...You are now born again'. A 'sinners prayer' often comes with this and if you pray that prayer you are 'saved'? But nowhere does the Bible focus on any such 'decision' as assurance. Added to this, nowhere does the Bible even say unsaved man can 'choose' God! Scriptures too numerous to mention, state the opposite! (Eph.1:4,5; 2Thess.2:13; Matt.20:16; 22:14; Mk.13:20; Acts 9:15; 22:14; Rom.16:13; 2Tim.2:4; Rev.17:14).

The one doctrine rejected in all of this and that which is at the heart of this false modern evangelism and false gospel is that unsaved man is in depravity, unable to do anything towards deciding, choosing Christ for his salvation. The answer to the problem is only found in the Gospel about Christ and only as the Holy Spirit quickens the unsaved who are 'DEAD in sins'! Today the sovereignty of God in salvation has been taken out of the Gospel. We urge our readers to reject the new terms used in this decisional gospel. Trust the Holy Spirit to save people as they hear only about what God has done for us in His Son and God's call to believe and repent.

Terry Arnold

What of the Trump Prophecies?

More than fifty Pentecostal/Charismatic pastors, preachers and writers across America and many more around the world were last month strangely silent or backtracking with lame excuses, after Joe Biden was elected as President of the USA. The number of false prophets who clearly prophesied Trump would win are too numerous to even document!

Bethel California Senior Associate Leader Kris Vallotton in December apologised for prophesying President Donald Trump would win. Vallotton is well known in charismatic circles for his books on prophecy and his prophetic ministry. He operates schools for prophets and 'Advanced Training For Prophetic Ministry'. He is co-founder of Bethel 'School of Supernatural Ministry'. He admitted there was now a 'credibility gap' in his ministry. Yet Vallotton removed the video of this when Trump began appealing the election!

Hundreds of high profile leaders went silent after prophesying Trump would win. Some still maintain they heard from God. Jeremiah Johnson stated he had a dream six weeks prior to prophesying Trump would win. He heard the voice of the Holy Spirit saying 'the iniquity of the Amorites [in America] is complete'. In Genesis 15 God tells Abraham his descendants would be enslaved for 400 years and in the fourth generation would return to the land that God gave him 'for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure'. Amazingly, Johnson applied this to Trump and America and that it is about 'the Lord healing our land'!

Kat Kerr, a self styled prophet and media hub for many other prophets, stated 'The rocks are about to move and Trump will be President no matter what you hear... Trump will win. He will be president of the United States, he will sit in that office for four more years and God will have His way in this country.'

How many false prophecies make a false prophet? What was the punishment for false prophets in the Old Testament? How many false prophecies each and every day around the world will there be before believers of the practise of prophesying will assess why this is a biblically false and dangerous practise? (Dt.13:3,4; 18:22). Why is the 'more sure word of prophecy...the prophecy of the scripture' not sufficient (2Pet.1:19,20)? Why add to it and incur a serious judgement (Deut.4:2; 12:32; Prov.30:6; Rev.22:18,19)? Hebrews chapter 1 clearly teaches God 'spoke in time PAST unto the fathers by the prophets, Has in these last days SPOKEN unto us by his Son...'

Other 'prophets', now false prophets, who falsely prophesied Trump as president are: Pastor Kent Christmas of Regeneration-Nashville; Robin Bullock 'pastor prophet'; Syd Roth, tele-evangelist; Kevin Zadai, 'prophet'; Michelle Bachmann former U.S. rep.; Tracey Cooke 'prophet'; Pat Robertson tele-evangelist; Denise Goulet, 'pastor' international churches Las Vegas; Robert Henderson, 'prophet'; Hank Kunneman, 'prophet pastor'; Kenneth Copeland, mega pastor; Mark Taylor, prophet (he stated a 'curse' if one voted Biden); Greg Locke, pastor...For more and to see some of the wild prophecies watch:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9XD1M6VcfN0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tiXeK7mz1yk>

Nevertheless, I would venture an answer to the first question - 'No'. The Pope is certainly not a Biblical Christian. His doctrine is diametrically opposed to that of the long line of historic Christians before him including the Reformers, the Puritans and Bible teachers. His doctrines include salvation by faith plus works in a sacramental system whereby Grace is 'infused' through the sacraments rather than righteousness *imputed* in Justification. Further, such teachings as the Marian doctrine, Purgatory, the Mass, also show clearly that in Catholicism the work of Christ was not 'finished'. Much more could be said to this and is explored in detail in our book 'To Catholics Whom I Love' and our tract and video (see our 'Resource List' on our website).

The second question on the 'tongues' issue - I am unsure what Youseff would teach on this. But the scriptures teach that Biblical tongues were *known human earthly languages, dialects*, as taught clearly in Acts 2 where the Greek word for 'tongue' and 'language' is 'dialektos' (vs.6,8) and is shown to be *known understood 'languages'*. Again, much more could be said to this and is explored in detail in our book 'Tongues & The Baptism With the Spirit'. See also our 'Questionnaire' section on the website.

Churches of Christ and Women in Ministry, Tongues...

Hello, I would like your help. I am a Christian who has been in the Churches of Christ [CofC] for many years but have now left it as I do not agree with Women being pastors...and many of the CofC also include speaking in tongues...A local CofC pastor was praying in 'tongues' during a baptismal service...I would like some resources to send to a friend involved in this...

...Thanking you in Christ Jesus, Our Lord.

(Name withheld at editor's discretion)

Editor's reply:

Hello...Resources for this are mostly on our website: www.taministries.net

In the 'Articles' section under 'Pentecostal/Charismatism' section there are two articles on 'Tongues'. The 'Tongues Test' is suitable to hand out to give understanding of and an overview of 'Tongues'. There is also another article about linguistics. We are happy to also send you a copy of our book 'Tongues and the Baptism With the Spirit' if you want to go deeper and wider.

Then in the 'Women in Ministry' heading there is a 'TAM Response' to a paper written by Qld. Churches of Christ when they were first bringing in women elders many years ago. (You might also be interested in the 'The Day They Evicted Our Church' in the same section - the story of Qld Churches of Christ evicting Hervey Bay Bible Church from their property in 2013).

Every blessing as you test these subjects which are so misunderstood today...

Your Comments and Questions

(Views expressed here are not necessarily those of the editor)

Charles Stanley

Dear Terry, over time I have appreciated your thoughts on matters...

Dr. Charles Stanley's view on salvation is hard to understand. He seems to say if you are saved, no matter how you live-walk afterwards, you are always saved, even if you walk as an un-regenerate, unsaved man. The Scriptures do say we are sealed by the Spirit and also 'Faith without works is a dead faith, and I will show you my faith by my works'. (I know we are saved by Faith alone).

It seems to me if one is truly saved, then who can snatch you from Almighty God? But if one is walking as the World, then perhaps one was not saved at all.

I was watching Dr. Michael Youssef on TV to see how sound he is in doctrine...I wrote to them with a number of questions hoping to gain more insight into their doctrine: 'Is the Pope a Christian?'; 'What is your view on the modern day 'tongues' and a few other questions.

I received a reply directing me to their website for answers but there were no answers there. Again I wrote asking why they would not answer these questions. I was referred to a book about Dr. Youssef and his life. Still no answers...I am suspicious of Dr. Youssef's doctrine...Do you have information about his soundness or theology?

Lastly, you once wrote: 'They are professing christians'. Please explain this more. Cults, churches, the Catholic Church claim to be 'Christian'.

(R.S., NSW)

I don't know a lot about Charles Stanley, having only watched a few of his sermons in the past. The ones I have seen I found a measure of psychology and 'easy believism' mixed into his messages. Recently in the July/August 2020 *Diakrisis* (P.17) - we addressed Stanley's view of the 'carnal christian' which very much speaks to this issue of true salvation and the necessary fruit that true salvation must have to be authentic. (I would urge readers to review that article).

The term '*professing christians*' I use to refer to all christians who are 'professing' their faith whether they are saved or not. Some are 'professors' only but not 'possessors'. There is a faith '*in vain*' (1Cor.15:2,14; 2Cor.6:1; James 1:26; 2:20) and many will call him '*Lord, Lord...*' and not be saved (Matt.7:21-23).

I have not investigated Michael Youssef's doctrine but I have watched some of his sermons and found them quite sound and challenging. However, it is disappointing when questions cannot be answered squarely. To give the benefit of the doubt it may be because ministries such as Youssef's global TV ministry may be overwhelmed with e-mails to answer, and do not have the staff to answer every question? It may also be that to avoid controversy such worldwide ministries may not answer such queries?

The Enigma of Michael Brown

Michael Brown is a leading and popular U.S. apologist, radio host and author for the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement. On social media he currently has a wide range of influence over many Christians.

Many who follow this man forget that he was a leader of the infamous Brownsville 'revival' in Pensacola between 1996-2000 (see '*Diakrisis*' September 97 - '*The Pensacola Revival*'). The movement was full of exaggerations, lies, false prophecies and extreme manifestations. The leaders achieved much wealth from the movement, one of the leaders, John Kilpatrick, lived in a luxurious lifestyle. Michael Brown does not talk about the millions of dollars that went missing in this 'revival' and the huge mortgages incurred for buildings. Kilpatrick claimed the revival began when a '*river of the glory of God...came through my legs...*' He was '*drunk in the spirit*' and 'paralysed' for 3.5 hours. There was 'pandemonium' in the church with laughter and animal manifestations. (This 'revival' had come with links to the divisive 'Toronto Blessing' beforehand). Mental health centres reported treating people who came to the 'revival'. Healing claims were undocumented and unsubstantiated. Claims of reduced crime rates were shown to be false (the opposite was later documented). Claims of tens of thousands of 'decisions for Christ' were also made. False prophecies came and went. The movement was exposed as a sham.

In 2000 the board removed Michael Brown from the movement and he started the 'Fire School of Ministry' and took many of the students from Brownsville.

Michael Brown admits the problem concerning false prophecies. He even cites an amusing story of a prophecy in one church where a woman was told she would be a missionary to India but her husband was told that he was being called to China (the speaker didn't know they were married). When they got in the car, the wife said, '*The man of God told me we're called to be missionaries and we're going to India!*' The husband replied, '*No, the man of God told me we're called to be missionaries and we're going to China!*' Confused, they went back into the building to ask for clarification. The speaker smiled and said, '*No, there's no contradiction. God is calling you to Indochina!*'

Concerning the many failed prophecies concerning Trump's re-election, Brown admits '*Either your words will come to pass with astonishing accuracy and the nation will witness the miraculous re-election of Donald Trump, or your words will prove false*'. Yet he also says they can be 'mistaken', not false prophets! Brown fails to see the theology behind the mass of false prophecies each year is not the '*more sure word of prophecy...the prophecy of the scripture*' (2Pet.1:19,20). The Bible teaches God '*spoke in time PAST unto the fathers by the prophets, Has in these last days SPOKEN unto us by his Son...*' (Heb.1:1,2).

Brown himself also frequently has ministered with false prophets and teachers such as Benny Hinn, Kenneth Copeland, Todd White, Jesse Du Plantis and Bill Johnson (Bethel). Brown is popular as a conservative Charismatic but the roots of the movement and its teachings are the same - extra biblical.

Terry Arnold

The 'De-conversion' Phenomenon *Why Are So Many 'Losing the Faith'?*

Social and Christian media have been awash in recent years with public accounts of popular authors, singers and pastors 'losing the faith' and declaring themselves no longer Christian. Although this has for centuries been biblically called 'apostasy', it has recently made headlines because of the status and popularity of some of the leaders. Names such as Bart Ehrman and more recently Marty Sampson (Hillsong) and Joshua Harris (author, pastor, preacher), who held the attention of millions, now not only deny the faith but many have apologised for their Christian teachings and are now 'agnostic' or 'atheistic'.

In this article I want to suggest some common 'threads' that run through the very public testimonies of such people.

The Intellectual Thread

Bart Ehrman was a prominent scholar and a textual critic who excelled above others in the Biblical languages. In his book *Misquoting Jesus* he tells how he was once a fundamentalist Christian who never doubted the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible. But as he began studies towards a Phd he began questioning what he saw as 'contradictions' and 'discrepancies' in the Biblical manuscripts. He questioned the differences between manuscripts and why scribes would add to them. This led to a reduced view of the Bible and questioning why God did not preserve the manuscripts better. He became a 'liberal christian' and then later an agnostic when he could not also reconcile 'evil and suffering'.

A close look at his arguments will show many of his premises concerning the lack of consistency in the Biblical manuscripts are overstatements and exaggerations. The Bible is in fact unique in its consistency and the number of manuscripts which it is supported by. The 'errors' Ehrman speaks of are actually a fraction of the whole and 'variants' rather than 'errors'. (See our booklet *The Battle for the Bible* for a summary on the preservation and accuracy of the Bible).

The 'thread' here which seems to be at the root of the collapse of Ehrman's faith is the intellectual one of scholarship and learning. When that link failed him so did his 'faith'. But what did Ehrman really think of the *person* and *work* of Jesus Christ and the Gospel? How central was that *as a foundation*? Was Ehrman's house of faith built on that foundation or on the intricacies of 'textual criticism'? If a single 'error' was really found would that cause his house to crumble? When his house of faith did eventually collapse Ehrman turned his attention then to publicly undermining the deity of Christ.

Our belief system must not be based on foundations that will crumble at the first crisis of faith. 'Inerrancy is important and Bible students should settle this issue once and for all before further studies, but it must not be the foundation which holds one's faith together. *The house of faith must be built on the rock of the person of Christ and the relationship thereof.* Do we believe he is our personal Saviour who has died for our sin? 'Inerrancy of the scriptures is not a

Your Comments and Questions (Views expressed here are not necessarily those of the editor)

The Puritans in America

I have read your article about the Puritans [Jan/Feb 2021] - it is good reading and includes some names of great men of God. We can thank God for them... [but] the struggle for religious freedom in America, something which the Puritans stood against, it is a very different story. God bless...

(A.R., Qld)

Editor's reply:

I agree, the American Puritan history is different to the English. My main interest was the *theology* of the Puritans and their desire for further reformation and *holiness* - both personal and in the church at large. Our article was describing mainly the English side of Puritan history. I agree the Puritans on the American continent did have a chequered history. However, not all the American Puritans were *'against religious freedom'*. And many Puritans did actually separate from the Church of England, although as you say the majority tried to reform it. The Church of England (and other denominations) was not as apostate as it is today. I think if the Puritans were alive today they would be shocked at how the Church of England (and other denominations) have apostatised, and they probably would sever themselves from it more than they did in history.

When the Puritans came to America (particularly Boston) they had their own government. They were essentially a 'theocracy' type of government. They had their own magistrates and laws. Hence when people broke those laws people were punished accordingly. Many today do not realise such history and culture when taking into account historical events (similarly with Calvin and Geneva). It was essentially a church run state and no division as such between church and state. No doubt many today would see the laws of the Puritans to be harsh or legalistic - when in political power in England they banned festival days such as Christmas and Easter as well as sport and other activities on the 'Christian Sabbath'.

Arguably there were some excesses on the American continent. Even in theology the Mather family strayed a long way away from scripture to setting dates for Christ's return, etc. The 'Salem Witch Trials' saw gross mistakes made which were repented of later. But again, there were laws in place at the time against witchcraft. Many of the people executed in those trials were practising demonic activity and knowingly breaking the laws.

Separation of church and state by the end of the 17thC arguably brought more 'religious freedom'. The American Puritans, because they were not persecuted like in England, they did arguably become 'a law unto themselves'. Such are the pros and cons of religion and politics when mixed.

to 'fly into the wilderness' to be supernaturally protected for 'a time, and times, and half a time'.

'Eagles wings' are mentioned in Exodus 19:4 in describing how God protected Israel from the Egyptians (see also Deut.32:9,11 and Is.40:31).

The phrase 'a time, and times, and half a time' refers to years as in Daniel 4:16,23,25,32. 'Times' is double the former 'time'; and 'half a time' is half the former 'time' - equalling 3.5 years (Dan.12:7; 13:5). This 3.5 years equals '42 months' and '1,260 days' elsewhere (Dan.12:7; Rev.11:2,3; 12:6,14; 13:5).

Some spiritualise these verses to be simply a long period of time but chapter 4 of Daniel (Nebuchadnezzar's judgement) clearly has 'times' as years. Often in scripture if it is not literal 'years' the text states this (eg. Ez.4:6; Nu.14:34; 2Pet.3:8). For the first four centuries such phrases as the '1260 days' in Revelation were usually interpreted literally, until later allegorical and even mystical interpretations changed this to years.

The 'serpent', representing the Devil, issues from his mouth a 'flood after the woman' (vs.15); but 'the earth helped the woman' (vs.16).

anti-Semitism is nothing new. Israel in nearly every century has been persecuted and expelled from many nations. Yet there have been remnants of people who have 'helped' the Jews.

The 'dragon was wroth with the woman and...the remnant of her seed' because these 'keep the commandments' and have 'the testimony of Jesus Christ' (vs.17). The commandments here is 'entoles' (not 'nomos' - the law) and is synonymous with the Word of God (1Jn.2:3-7; 1Cor.7:19; 1Jn.3:22).

The 'testimony of Jesus' is again (as in vs.11) those who have testified to being followers of Jesus Christ and their dying to self and even to death.

This chapter summarises a brutal and fearsome part of what is called the time of 'Jacob's Trouble'. Satan pours out his venom against God's Word and his saints.

Our sub-editor summarises:

'In our day, and this generation, the once mystifying events portrayed in this book are being prepared and laid out before us. Globalist leaders are now bringing to pass exactly what is described in this incredible prophecy. It is quite obvious that the technology required to bring about a Fascist global government that can restrict buying and selling to a group of their choosing, that can detect and restrict the movement of every human on the planet, control the world's monetary and governmental systems, is being constructed NOW.'

'The clamour for a Messianic political figure is growing louder and louder with each passing day and the moment that he is to be revealed cannot be too far away now?'

The great cosmic battle is underway and soon coming to a climax. The end is sure because of who God is, the omnipotent sovereign King of kings!

Terry Arnold

necessity to be accepted into Heaven. (Most Christians today would doubtless be lost in proving the 'inspiration' and 'inerrancy of scripture). Is our house of belief built on *the shifting sand of an intellectual argument, or on the Rock* (Matt.4:24-27)? So too, if our whole belief system is built on one part of theology and we find 'fault' in that, will the house fall on that shifting sand?

Ehrman's belief system was arguably built on something that would collapse with academia. I am not here decrying the study of theology, something that is sadly lacking today, but if this is not based on the foundation of the Gospel, Christ as our personal Saviour and a relationship therein, then a head full of knowledge and questions may well lead to a house in danger of collapse. Faith is not predicated upon academia, else when the finite ability of such stumbles, so does the 'faith' built on it.

The Thread of Logic and Reasoning

In many of the stories of 'de-conversions', logic and reasoning play a part. Many of those who recently have apostatised argue that God is too harsh; His judgement is unfair; and why does he not stop evil and suffering and cure diseases? But the very root of this reasoning is in the garden of Eden where the first Adam and Eve put their own logic before God's commands. They did not like the way God was doing things. Satan put the question to them 'has God really said?' When the test of a crisis of faith came, they failed.

With the questions and logic comes a change in moral standards. Most of the prominent leaders who have 'de-converted' were questioning moral standards and interestingly often in the sexual area.

Joshua Harris was senior pastor of Covenant Life Church in Gaithersburg, Maryland. He wrote many best selling books including 'I Kissed Dating Goodbye, and 'Sex Isn't the Problem: Lust Is'. When he finally came out and gave up his 'faith', he wrote: 'I have undergone a massive shift in regard to my faith in Jesus. The popular phrase...is 'deconstruction,' the biblical phrase is 'falling away.' By all the measurements I have for defining a Christian, I am not a Christian'. Harris said he had conversely been 'repenting' of views he once held and taught. He had an about-face on homosexuality and asked for forgiveness from those who identify as homosexual and then publicly marched with them. Harris also separated from his wife of 20 years who also has 'de-converted' and is now creating secular music and a musical that would 'explore themes like identity, authenticity, gender roles and power in the conservative church'.

In hindsight, Harris had developed noble purity standards for dating, marriage and church that were arguably based on a moral standard. When that was questioned so too did his view of God and morality change. His own standard of what is fair and unfair, what is pure and impure, became deeply compromised. The standards went out the door. A close friend wrote a heartfelt but an insightful letter to Harris: 'You thought your faith and your marriage were based on formulas. They never went deeper than that. Jesus says about people like you that

in the last judgment, He will say 'Depart from me, I never knew you'...this means you never actually knew Him. As immersed as you were in Christian culture and a career as a pastor, you never actually knew Jesus. It gives me only heartache to say these things to you. And Jesus will take no pleasure in pronouncing those words in judgment of you or anyone. You haven't walked away from a relationship with Jesus. You have walked away from the culture you were raised in...Josh, you and your story are not the measure of the validity of Christianity. Jesus is real. He doesn't want you to return to your prior formulas. He wants you to come to Him for the first time and learn to love. I am praying for you, Josh. With love and sorrow' (Mike Farris (<https://www.christianpost.com/voice/a-letter-to-josh-harris.html>))

There are two important threads here to consider. Firstly, the concentration on, or immersion in, a particular issue or a 'culture'. Harris was heavily into one area - the area of dating, marriage and commitment to purity. He became almost a revered cult like figure in that. That arguably became a foundation for who he was and his 'faith'. Again, the question is - did he really have a relationship with the person of Jesus and as Saviour for his sin? How central was that *as a foundation*? What did he think of the Gospel? Was his foundation built only on the issues he raised on subjects such as purity and commitment in marriage?

Secondly, when his house of faith was collapsing a logic arose in which Harris was questioning God on moral issues, including homosexuality. When the house did eventually collapse Harris was quick to turn his attention to publicly undermining what God has said on such issues and even to apologising to, and marching with, Gay and Lesbian people. Again, human logic overrode what God has said. Harris's wife along with Joshua also stated that she wanted to '*listen to her own inner voice*'.

Marty Sampson is also an example of this human logic and reason overriding what God has said. Marty was a prolific worship music writer with Hillsong. In 2020 he stated Christianity is '*just another religion...I'm genuinely losing my faith, and it doesn't bother me...I am so happy now, at peace with the world...How many miracles happen? Not many. No one talks about it. Why is the Bible full of contradictions? No one talks about it. How can God be love yet send four billion people to a place, all coz they don't believe? No one talks about it...Science keeps piercing the truth of every religion...Let the rain fall, the sun will come up tomorrow...*'. (Leah Marie Ann Klett, *Christian Post* Reporter)

Note the *questioning* and *logic* here - as if we know better than God? Note the logic here that God cannot be loving if he sends people to Hell. In nearly all these 'de-conversions' *the emphasis is on love and against God's justice*. But how many sermons would Marty have heard in Hillsong about the justice and judgement of God? How many expositions would he have heard from Romans chapter 1-3? Note also the issue of '*miracles*'. The Pentecostal/Charismatic and Hillsong movements are awash with false gospels of healing, miracles, signs and wonders, human 'potential', wealth and other earthly and temporal excitements, served up with ecstatic worship through music to make it all feel good. Most participants do not examine the '*miracles*' - if they did they would find they are

The '*great dragon*' here is described as the '*old serpent*', the '*Devil*' and '*Satan*'. '*Devil*' ('*diabolos*') means 'slanderer' or 'accuser' (Rev.12:10; Rom.8:31-34); '*Satan*' means 'adversary'.

Vs.10-12

'And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, you heavens, and you that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short time'.

There is an outburst of praise upon the news that the Devil who is '*the accuser of the brethren...day and night*' before the throne has been '*cast down*'. A '*loud voice*' proclaims '*salvation...strength...the kingdom of God...the power of Christ*' is come. Indeed, Christ continually intercedes for his saints (Rom.8:34)!

There is here also a wonderful description of the overcoming saint! Note the saints do not defeat and 'overcome' Satan with rites, deliverances, 'binding and loosing', rebuking, etc. They '*overcome*' by '*the blood of the lamb*' (1Pet.1:18,19) - Christ's sacrificial death and shed blood to satisfy God for sin; by their consistent '*testimony*' based upon the Word of God; and their *dying to self* even to *death*.

All those who dwell in the heavens are urged to '*rejoice*'. But an interjection of grief ('*woe*') is given to the inhabitants of '*the earth and of the sea*' because '*the devil is come down having great wrath, because he knows he has but a short time*' - the remainder of the 'Great Tribulation'.

The war in Heaven would become an increasing war on the earth.

Vs.13-17

'And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ'.

The '*dragon*' persecutes the '*woman*' (Israel) which '*brought forth the man child*' (Christ the Messiah). But the woman is given '*two wings of a great eagle*'

hatred of the Devil towards God's people is seen here in figurative language. The 'dragon' desired to kill this 'child', as was seen in Herod's attempt to kill infants under two years of age after hearing of the birth of the Messiah (Lk.4:28-30).

Vs.5,6

'And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days. 'She brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne'.

The 'man child' is Jesus born of descendency from king David of the 'woman', Israel. In his Millennial kingdom Christ will rule 'with a rod of iron'.

Christ was 'caught up unto God' - the word 'caught up' here is the Greek 'harpázo', Latin meaning 'rapture' (see also Acts 8:39; 2Cor.12:2,4; 1Thess.4:17). Christ was 'raptured' in the ascension back to Heaven.

The 'woman' (Israel) escapes and is protected for 3.5 years in the 'wilderness' (vs.14; 11:2,3; 13:5). This corresponds to the last part of the Great Tribulation (Matt.24:21). A remnant left of Israel will be saved (Rom.11:26). Many scholars would have the place in the 'wilderness' (Matt.24:15-21) as Petra in current day Jordan - it is southeast of the dead sea and a rock city exists there with a narrow gorge leading into it.

Vs.7-9

'And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him'.

There is a 'war in heaven' between Satan's angels and God's angels led by 'Michael and his angels'. Only two holy angels are named in Scripture, Gabriel and Michael, both named in the book of Daniel. Michael is described as 'one of the chief princes', 'your prince', 'the great prince' and 'the archangel' (Dan.10:13,21; 12:1; Jude 1:9). He is the guardian of Israel (Dan.12:1) and once contested the body of Moses - (Jude 9).

When this 'war in heaven' occurred we are not told, but it occurred in the heavenlies and so is a spiritual battle of spiritual bodies of which John must have been in awe seeing the replay. Satan 'and his angels were cast out' to 'deceive the whole world' and would wreak final havoc upon the earth in fury and anger (1Pet.5:8). Satan is not the commander of Hell as some suppose, for here he is expelled from Heaven and sent to earth as its ruler (Eph.2:2; Jn.12:31; 14:30; 16:11). His entry to Hell is not till the end (Rev.20).

not miraculous but fraudulent exaggerated claims full of lies. But if such things are the foundation of one's Christianity then when it fails, what is left? Note too the assumptions that 'the Bible is full of contradictions. No one talks about it'. Really? Has Marty investigated any apologetic sites or been to a church which answer these issues? And he says 'science keeps piercing the truth of every religion'. Rather, increasingly, science and archaeology are actually confirming the truth of scripture! No examples of any of these statements by Sampson are given as proof. It is the logic and reasoning of a finite mind attempting to bring an infinite God down to a human level.

The Threads Assessed

Real faith is not lost by what we do not understand or can test with our human minds. It is given by God at regeneration (Jn.3:3 'gennáo ánothen' - 'born from above'). That 'faith' cannot be lost although it can be tested and tried. If these cultural 'Christians' have been truly born again, they will return to the faith; if apostates and in a permanent 'de-conversion' then they are simply going back to what their earthly nature demands (2Pet.2:22).

But to the heart of the issue - God has revealed himself to us in the Gospel and in the person of Jesus Christ. It is this that changes the nature of someone of the world who is 'dead in sin'! Do we worship our own logic, or the revelation God has given us in His word and in Jesus Christ? If the former then we worship a lie and the creature more than the creator (Rom.1:25).

We don't know everything! 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the Lord? or who has been his counselor?' (Rom.11:33,34).

Do we understand all of the mysteries of predestination, the Trinity and the foreordination of the sacrifice of Christ even before man had sinned (Acts 2:23; 1Pet.1:20)?

How has all this apostasy come about? This author believes it is the lack of true Gospel preaching as a foundation against the avalanche of last days false gospels and decisional methods. Some of these apostates might not have made 'decisions' in the first place if the true Gospel and a God of love and justice had been preached? If a person is truly saved, born from above, their nature and hearts quickened from the deadness of sin, then and only then will God keep them in the faith. They may stumble and even have a crisis of faith, suffer trials, tribulations, but they will be kept by the power of God (1Pet.1:4,5)

The antidote is the true gospel passionately preached, expounded, exposted. Then study the Bible and learn how God and Christ and the Holy Spirit think far above our reasoning. Truth is found only in the Word of God and it is that which transforms. God has revealed all we need to know in Jesus Christ who was sent to die for our sins as a substitute in a substitutionary sacrifice in order to satisfy a sin hating God of love and justice.

Terry Arnold

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A Fresh Look at Revelation - Part 7

In **Part 1** (chapters 1-4 - *Diakrisis* July/August 2019) the intent was to show that the book of Revelation *is to be understood* at least as far as *what John saw and described*. *What is figurative and what is more literal can be determined with the language and referencing to other scriptures* ('scripture interprets scripture').

It is necessary to have studied the book of Daniel first, as much of Revelation is referenced in that book.

The *timing and the order of events* in the first three chapters are presented as events in John's day *with a divide in time and order at chapter 4* (see 1:19).

In **Part 2** (chapters 4,5 - *Diakrisis* September/October 2019) we continued to explore *what is 'literal' or 'figurative' and why*. This was done by searching the same *symbols, signs and wording* elsewhere.

In **Part 3** (chapters 6-8 - *Diakrisis* July/August 2020) we saw the first of three distinct judgements beginning with seven '*seals*' (ch.6), all increasing in intensity.

In **Part 4** (chapters 8,9 - *Diakrisis* September/October 2020) we saw the second set of seven judgements begin *the Trumpet Judgements* and an increasing intensity in three last graphic '*woes*'. A perfect God has a perfect judgement!

Part 5 (chapters 9,10 - *Diakrisis* November/December 2020) - The sixth trumpet judgement brings a more severe judgement - *death*. More than half the earth's population is now destroyed in divine judgements! The people left alive are unrepentant.

Part 6 (chapter 11 - *Diakrisis* January/February 2021) - the 'two witnesses' preach and the antichrist arises amidst signs and wonders the likes of which have never been seen before since the first coming of Christ.

Part 7 - Chapter 12

Vs.1,2

'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'.

The word '*wonder*' is from the Greek word '*semeion*' meaning '*sign*'. This is the first of seven signs before the book of Revelation is finished. This word '*wonder*' means the '*woman*' cannot be taken literally as is also obvious from the phrase '*sun and the moon under her feet*'. This '*woman*' is a *sign* representing

Israel and reflects Joseph's dream of Genesis chapter 37. Joseph dreams that '*the sun and the moon and the eleven stars bowed down to me*' (Gen.37:9). The sun represents Jacob, the moon Rachel and the eleven stars Joseph's brothers. The twelve sons of that family were to become the *twelve tribes of Israel*.

Further, in Revelation the '*child*' (vs.2) is revealed as Jesus Christ who rules '*with a rod of iron*' (Rev.2:27,19:15). Christ is born of the nation Israel (Heb.7:14). The nation Israel is very often characterised as a '*woman*' (Micah 4:9,10 - '*a woman in travail*', and in Is.54:5, Jer.3:8,14; 4:31; 31:32; also compare Gen.39:9 and Rev.12:1). In Revelation 12:13,14, this same '*woman*' is persecuted and flees into the wilderness. Almost all commentators see this '*woman*' as Israel. Indeed, Israel was in much '*travail*' awaiting her Messiah to come.

The Roman Catholic religion claims to fit chapter 12 to be describing Mary. However, much scripture reveals Israel as being persecuted. Mary was never persecuted and never fled into the wilderness. Mary will also not be on earth during that time but the nation Israel will be.

Nowadays, in light of the many studies and published literature on the Book of Revelation, most Roman Catholic commentators now agree that Revelation 12 cannot be used for a Marian interpretation. However, amazingly in some Catholic Bibles, the author has read a footnote which shows the doublespeak of Catholicism: '*This woman is not the Blessed Virgin, for the details of the prophecy do not fit her...[but] by accommodation the church applies this verse to the Blessed Virgin*' (*The Catholic Bible*, P.228).

Vs.3,4

'And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and 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: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born'.

'*Another wonder*' (another '*sign*') appears in Heaven - '*a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads*'. We are told the '*dragon*' is the Devil (vs.9); the heads are world empires (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome and the future antichrist empire). The '*ten horns*' are kings under the antichrist (17:10; Dan.7:23-25).

'*His tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth*'. The '*stars*' are angels (9:1) and this speaks of when Satan rebelled against God as revealed in verse 9 (see also Is.14:12-15; Ezek.28:12-17). Since that time his abode has been in the atmosphere of the earth (Eph.2:2).

'*The dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born*'. Satan is the mortal enemy of the '*woman*', Israel - God's elect nation through which the Messiah would come. The