

basically imprisoned Palestinian Arabs who just want to live in peace.

There are 22 Arab countries in the world. Why haven't they welcomed and absorbed those displaced Arabs into their societies?...The truth is the 'Palestinian' Arabs are political pawns in a geo-political and ideological-religious dispute, and are prisoners held in glorified refugee camps in Gaza and the West Bank.

...From both biblical and secular history, the Jews in Israel are neither colonizers or occupiers. The Palestinian Arabs don't need to be freed from Israel, they need to be freed from Hamas and other terroristic and totalitarian groups holding them captive in a society with very limited possibilities of pursuing a normal and successful life. They should be not just pitied, but assisted in relocating to one of the many Arab controlled countries. And let the Jewish people live in their historic and biblical homeland along with the Arabs who wish to do so alongside them peaceably. And let there be Peace and Shalom in The Land.

(John Desser, Deputy Director of the Alliance for Israel Advocacy).

For Israel Reports contact israelreport@mail.com

Praise/Prayer Points

- We thank the Lord for the many opportunities to minister, preach and teach to churches, groups and individuals along the way in the recent August to November itinerary, which took the author to three states and more than a dozen churches. The messages were mostly recorded or videoed. The subjects and copies of any can be obtained from the editor.

- Any churches or fellowships who would like to be in the next 2024 itinerary, please contact this ministry.

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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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Editor's Comment

It is the author's personal passion to labour in theological and doctrinal writings. But at times I also love verbal discussions on the same, and even the occasional debate as they arise, one on one, with small groups, or in Q&A sessions. Certainly the apostles engaged in proving, reasoning, disputing, persuading and exhorting people to believe their doctrines and their Gospel (Acts 9:22; 17:1-3,16,17; 18:4,27,28; 22:1; Phil.1:7,17). Such apologetics, defences of the faith and teaching, sometimes change peoples minds. (1)

What the apologist is battling with today is on many fronts. There are the obvious cultic and closed minds who refuse even obvious facts or the flaws in their own system. I recently was reasoning with a group of Jehovah Witnesses when their Bible version came into discussion. I asked them what they would think and do if one could prove their Bible version had *added* in words *not in any manuscript* and that their translators did not know even basic Greek to be able to translate. However, they rejected this as impossible. After gaining an address I arrived days later with evidence and from their own interlinear and website. (2) Despite the facts they refused to even think further and I was told not to return. (I left them with a plea to check the facts and the warning of John 8:24).

The above might be expected in the cults but it is also not far from what I see in many Christians today. Many are indoctrinated with what they have read on the Internet and in websites. Others are steeped in church traditions. Few will, when shown contrary information, study both sides of any issue and *'with all readiness of mind, search the Scriptures...whether those things were so'* (Acts 17:11).

At times, I have agreed to meet with people who do not agree in doctrine or in important areas concerning salvation and the Gospel, only to be handed or referred to a pile of articles off the Internet. It becomes too often what seems right in their own eyes or from what someone else has written. An argument derived from study of both sides or then from an open Bible, seems less attractive to many today.

There is another deception most prevalent today - the common practise of reading into scriptures ideas and doctrines not actually in the text at all. This practise is seen in sermons, churches and websites. Scriptures such as 2 Peter 3:9; Joshua 24:15; Revelation 3:5,20 are regularly misinterpreted and misused, some to say almost the opposite to what the text is stating. (3) Such are often quoted like mantras in writings and sermons, and even by prominent authors and speakers.

One of the questions which dispels this error is to ask *'who is the passage speaking to?'* and *'what is the context, and what is the main point?'*. If the person has a high view of scripture as God's inspired infallible and all sufficient Word then these questions might quickly correct any error in mind. Some of these scriptures if misused and misunderstood can actually affect the very doctrine of salvation and the Gospel.

One of the subjects I increasingly find myself in debate, is - *what is or is not the role of the Holy Spirit for a person to be saved and come to Christ*. Is there anything a man can do apart from the Holy Spirit to come to Christ? Is there some

The History of Israel/Gaza

(Excerpted from *Israel Report* 24/10/2023)

Around 2100 BC, The Land was given by God to the children of Abraham (see Genesis 12). The children of Israel were expelled (by God) about 597 BC with a prophecy that they would one day return. Jews remained in the land continuously since Xerxes allowed them to return in 538 BC, but they did not control The Land, except for a brief period under Hasmonean rule in 142 BC.

The Land changed hands about a dozen times after that with a Roman emperor Hadrian renaming it from Judea to 'Palestina' in about 135 AD to insult the Jewish people after an unsuccessful revolt. The Philistines had ceased to exist some six hundred years BC, but Rome resurrected the name as an insult to the Jews.

The Land was fought over for centuries among the Babylonians, Persians (438-333 BC), Greeks (333-63), Jewish autonomy under Hasmonean Kingdom (142-129 BC), Romans (63 BC to 324 AD), Byzantines (324-638 AD), the Muslim Period (638-1099 AD), Crusaders (1095-1298 AD), Ottoman Turks (1517-1917).

At various times, Jews started returning to The Land, not feeling very welcome elsewhere. This movement increased in the 1800's, and more so after Britain gained control over the land following WWI in 1917.

When Theodore Herzl saw the anti-Semitism of the Dreyfuss Affair he wrote about the need for a Jewish homeland in The Land in his book 'The Jewish State' in 1896. In 1897, he organized the First Zionist Congress, an effort to galvanize the Jewish community worldwide to work towards a Jewish homeland in Israel. These efforts inspired Bible believing Englishmen to support a return of The Land to the Jewish people.

When Herzl petitioned the British government to establish a Jewish homeland in Uganda, the British denied the request. Instead, Britain stated its support for a Jewish homeland in Israel in the The Balfour Declaration. This was affirmed by the WWI allies of Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan in the San Remo Conference of 1920.

Herzl had predicted in 'The Jewish State' that anti-Semitism would get much worse in Europe before it got better, unless the Jews had a homeland of their own. He didn't know how dreadfully right he would be!

During the early 1900's more and more Jews began to emigrate back to The Land. Still more in the 1930's as Hitler came to power...After WWII, Jews who survived the concentration camps came in droves. Arabs who had squatted on the land, some for multiple generations, either sold their land to the Jews and in many cases were forcibly displaced. That is the history of The Land and the peoples who lived there over the millennia.

...[With] the utter hatred Hamas and Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad have against the Jews and their desire to wipe them off of the face of the earth... We are not just dealing with a territorial dispute which a segment of good-willed, displaced Arabs wish to resolve. Rather, there are demonic elements at work here who wish to perpetuate this dispute out of sheer, blind hatred of the Jewish people. These radical, hate-filled terrorist organizations have intimidated, manipulated, and

alive & well friends, & He's forever one of us, He's gone back to the place where His Father dwells to prepare another garden for us. Now that a divine Light shines along a once darkened path, 'we can step into that Light and boldly ask, that God would adopt us as His kids, not for anything we've done, but for the divine work that was done for us: The sinking of sin, and the death of death, the work of His only begotten Son. The dented & dying serpent still has his fans though, and they still walk the recovering earth, They reveal themselves by their twisting of God's Words and denying the Saviour's birth.

But this story of God is spreading around, as it has for thousands of years, His adopted children now tell the story and will go on with much blood, sweat, and tears. There are those who still deny it, & tell the serpent's story, That God can't be trusted, and that we can make our own garden of glory, So, a question remains, a question for you, are you ready to take your cue? The question you need to ask yourself is: who's offspring are you?

The Offspring

If you remain a child of the world, to the serpent you belong. But if you belong to the risen Son, your big Brother he has become. The story hasn't finished yet, but we're nearly at the end, cause Jesus said, 'I'm coming back soon, to gather God's children again!' So now we wait, for all the children of God to hear His epic story. So, when they hear His voice they'll know, He's calling them home, to live again, together, as His offspring, in eternal blessed glory. To be continued, Amen.

Friends, we don't come together today, gathered here in this building on a Christmas day for fairy tales or pipe dreams. This is a historical story. This is a true story. We are in a true story. This Christmas, you should consider what kind of character you are in God's unfolding drama...Many will live their lives without considering the plain truth of the gospel - God's gracious telling of our own story...He speaks to us, His Creation, He has not been silent in this world! Are you listening? Or, are you only hearing the stories you want to listen to or believe in? This Christmas... consider the story God has told in the world. Consider the gospel. That God sent His only begotten Son into the world to save sinners. Christ is no baby in a manger any more...He is sitting on the throne of God, at the right hand of the Father - the Ancient of Days...and he waits for the full number of all the offspring of God to be born into the light of the truth. Be born this Christmas. Be adopted into God's family. Abandon the dead lineage of Adam and his helpless race. If you would like to know more about any of this... along with all my brothers and sisters here are ready to hear your story. Your story is connected to our story. Our story is this story - the story of God and of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Let me pray for us. Father thank you for speaking to us, sending to us, caring for us, for saving us. Lord cause us to become fluent in the telling of our story - your story. The story of God's love for His creatures in Jesus Christ. May it be on our lips forevermore, in His name, the name above all names,

In Jesus name, amen.

innate ability in man that the Holy Spirit can use to bring him to Christ? Is it wholly of God to draw and save a man, or is it both parties working together towards salvation?

Those that believe there is some ability in man in and of himself to cause him to believe, often cite scriptures that they feel *imply* man has this freedom. Added to this is the *logic* that man must be able to choose Christ in and of himself when he is called to be responsible for his sin. However, in this they try in vain to reconcile opposite truths, the antinomy of the inability of unsaved man - with sovereign election; man's inability in and of himself to will his salvation - with man's responsibility to repent of sin; predestination - with the responsibility of man for his sin. Charles Spurgeon once stated: '*That God predestines, and that man is responsible, are two things that few can see. They are believed to be inconsistent and contradictory; but they are not. It is just the fault of our weak judgment. Two truths cannot be contradictory to each other. If, then, I find taught in one place that everything is foreordained, that is true; and if I find in another place that man is responsible for all his actions, that is true; and it is my folly that leads me to imagine that two truths can ever contradict each other. These two truths, I do not believe, can ever be welded into one upon any human anvil, but one they shall be in eternity: they are two lines that are so nearly parallel, that the mind that shall pursue them farthest, will never discover that they converge; but they do converge, and they will meet somewhere in eternity, close to the throne of God, whence all truth doth spring*'. (4)

Further to the above antinomy is the mass of scriptures clearly stating man cannot come to Christ unless the Holy Spirit starts a divine work (eg. Jn.1:13;6:44,65; 8:34; Rom.3:11; 8:7,8; 1Cor.2:14; Eph.2:1-5...). Unsaved man is a slave to sin in the unsaved state (Jn.8:34; Rom.6:16,17,20; Gal.4:7). This is why a woman named Lydia had to have her heart '*opened*' by the Lord (Acts 16:14)! It is all of grace and all '*of God*' (Eph.2:8,9; Jn.1:13)! These many scriptures must be reconciled, not avoided, that the mystery of work of the Spirit might be believed and trusted.

Similarly in seeing any erroneous thinking or doctrine it is again only the Holy Spirit that can take the truth off the pages of the Bible and bring it to the heart to be applied. Searching the scriptures in study is the instrument used in this work (Jn.17:17).

Finally, in any discussion or debate with those who oppose our views, we must from the scriptures '*not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing*' (2Tim.2:24,25).

Terry Arnold

(1) See our '*Debates on the Doctrines of Grace*' where three of the five debates (by e-mail) had changes of mind.

(2) The Watchtower interlinear has many places where 'Jehovah' has been inserted, replacing other words. Court cases concerning Charles Russell and Fred Franz showed they had little or no knowledge of original languages.

(3) See our website in 'Articles' - '*Bible Principles/Interpretation*' - '*Myth Busters*' - <https://taministries.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Myth-Busters.pdf>

(4) Sermon by Spurgeon '*Sovereign Grace and Man's Responsibility*', 1858.

Persecutions and Martyrdoms Continue

Terrorists have killed 23 pastors and forced closure of more than 200 churches in Nigeria's Kaduna State over the past 4 years...A pastor kidnapped on Aug. 8 reported there are over 215 Christians abducted by bandits in Birnin Gwari forest, and still there...Hundreds have been killed and others kidnapped in the last 4 years...Over 115 Baptist churches were forced to shut...and forced denominations, including ECWA, Assemblies of God and the Catholic Church, to close...

...Last month, two Christians were kidnapped in Kaduna state, two days after gunmen described as terrorists killed a Baptist pastor in another area of the state.

The persecution of Christians in Nigeria is particularly severe, with 90% of the over 5,600 Christians killed for their faith worldwide last year being Nigerian...

Islamic State-aligned extremists recently separated and massacred at least 11 Christians in northern Mozambique this month...The killings occurred in the village of Naquitengue, near Mocimboa da Praia, in the province of Cabo Delgado...Terrorists reportedly arrived in the village...gathered the population, separated Christians from Muslims based on names and ethnicity before opening fire on the Christians, leaving more dead and others seriously wounded. The local terrorist group, claiming allegiance to the Islamic State, confirmed in a statement that it had killed 11 Christians.

...The attacks in Cabo Delgado and neighboring Niassa province have resulted in the internal displacement of around 1 million people. Roughly 5,000 people have been brutally murdered, according to Bishop of Pemba António Juliase...Reports have emerged of Islamist jihadists in Mozambique forcefully converting abducted Christian women into Islam and sexually enslaving them.

...In November 2020, Islamic State-linked militants beheaded over 50 people, including women and children, and abducted others in weekend raids in the Miudumbe and Macomia districts of the Cabo Delgado province...Last year, an Italian nun was shot and killed while six others were beheaded...

(Extracted from Christian Post, 18/9/2023 and 25/9/2023)

The Fight of Sanctification

'The idea that all you have to do is to accept Christ and you are in is a great mistake. It leaves people with the impression that if they accept Christ they have no fight to fight, no warfare, no job to do and no temptations. They are just in.

When you accept Christ rightly as your Lord and Savior you are in, but to be honest, you have just started to fight. People get converted and we do not tell them that they must fight all the way through to Heaven because of the spirit of degeneration and the tendency to deteriorate. They must fight, pray through, suffer it out and live in praise and worship, because if they do not they will deteriorate. Read the history of the Christian church if you can keep your faith and keep from weeping'.

(A.W. Tozer)

us from the grave's strong hold. Look at all the people of the earth, we worship false gods and idols from birth, Zeus or Buddha, Allah or Ra, Athena or Thor, or 'Follow your heart', 'I am you and you are me', 'You can be your own god, and so can we.' Is this not the very same lie the serpent put in the woman's head? 'If you wanna be like God, just reinterpret and recreate, what He Himself has said.'

Now look at the brokenness and disarray we're in. The story God tells shows it's all because of our own and original sin. So, what about the promised One who would come from the womb of the woman? How is a mere human going to deal with the human problem? Are you ready for the plot twist in the story of God: That He Himself in the Person of Christ, was the One who was foretold?

The Son

The Son of the woman was also the Son of God, Who had never been made, and could never grow old, He was happy to come, and be born as a man, To take the weight of the world on his shoulders and execute the perfect plan. The death that had infected the whole human race, would be injected into him, so He could be banished, and death be erased.

So, in a small town in Judah, called Bethlehem, prophecy was fulfilled in an animal pen, a baby was born to a woman who'd never been with a man, This was the sign, the signal God had given, for a hero, a Saviour, a serpent head crusher, a Son of the woman, a Son of mankind,

An offspring had arrived that could accomplish the mission. He lived an impossibly perfect life, of humility & obedience. He had control over the wildest winds, the waves on the sea, and even over all the demons. He told the people of earth that the time had finally arrived, 'The Spirit of God is on me, the anointed One you now see! He sent me to release the prisoners, and to set the captives free, To proclaim the year of God's good favour, & good news to those oppressed, I've come to give the blind their sight, and the poor I'll give my very best.' But, the One from God, Jesus the Christ, was soon after charged with all our sin, the crimes that Adam and Eve committed & all the crimes we followed them in. Instead of us, a brood of vipers, being made to pay the bill, the One and only Son of God died for us, upon the cross, upon the hill, by his own free will.

The Resurrection

But here's the kicker, the cherry on top, the poetic justice, the cream from the crop, the serpent struck the Saviour's heel, and revelled in His death wake. But he didn't discern the trojan horse, or spot the cosmic check-mate, See, God was pleased with the payment and satisfied with the act. So, He raised Jesus up from the grave to display the glorious fact: That death's venom wasn't strong enough to hold Jesus under. He came back from the dead, dropped a resurrected foot on death's head, & splattered the snake's melon asunder!

A Son has come, from the womb of the woman, and saved Adam's doomed race, Incarnated Creator, creating the way, by his dying and rising in our place. Jesus is

The One

But did you hear the glimmer of hope? Did you catch that flicker of light? God said an offspring would come from the womb of the woman, & stamp out the serpent's lights. It seems like God still loved them, even though they'd hurt Him so bad. It seems like God's gonna do something big, to bring restoration to what we once had.

But, years and years and years went by, and many children were born. All of them, just like their parents, were crooked and morally deformed. But we gotta keep going, to get to the part where the serpent slayer arrives, cause the seed of the serpent, is gaining ground, & death is spreading like flies.

One day a man named Noah, an offspring of the woman, a glimmer of hope, a flickering light, a man who rejected sin, rose up and started to tell God's story, and God said He was going to save him. Was this the one? The promised son? The one to render the curse undone? God did use Noah to save the day, & told him to build a gigantic boat. And all who'd listen & obey the captain, wouldn't sink in the flood, but float. Now the human race could start afresh! The sun was shining bright! On the very first day, Noah took some fruit, some grapes to see if they'd rot, He made some wine & drank it down, and drowned that flickering light. Our hero Noah did great things, and God used him for his glory, But Noah crushed grapes instead of the serpent's head, So, we gotta push on with the story...

A man named Abraham comes along, this surely is the One! He left his wicked hometown Ur and followed God around. He beat up all the evil kings that tried to strike his heel, but he stomped their heads & cut 'em down, & God made him an awesome deal: 'I'll make a people strong and pure, to come from your own tribe, You and your wife need to trust in me, your offspring will never die.' But Abraham had his doubts and tried to plan ahead, He didn't think his wife's womb would work, so he took another wife instead. God still kept his promise, but it's pretty plain to see, That Abraham was not the promised One, to fulfil the ancient decree.

Moses came a little later and shined like a brilliant light, but the heavy burden was far too great, though he tried with all his might. He brought the Law of God to man, after going up a mountain. But he let out a groan and broke God's stone when the people grumbled about him.

David the greatest King of Israel, was surely the dragon slayer, He killed the evil giant Goliath, with a sling, a stone, and a prayer. But David also later fell, just like all those before him. He killed his friend, to take his wife, and tried to hide his sin. Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar and Deborah...Gideon, Tola, Jair & Jephthah...Izban, Elon, Abdon & Samson...None of these heroes were able to pay the ransom. But God used all of them, to teach us a lesson, A clue to the riddle, to the mystery concealed, a whisper so we'd listen. The point of these ancient Bible stories is to show us we've lost our way.

At this point in the story, friends, it should all become clear as day, we, along with all these hory heroes are the true children of Adam & Eve, the orphans of that original sin, the remnant of a cosmic reprieve. And just like all these heroes of old, we fall for the lies we're told, neither caste nor creed, nor war nor peace, has freed

African Extremes - 'Deliverance' Sets Woman On Fire

'A woman suffered severe burns during a deliverance ceremony led by a pastor in Nigeria's Ogun state...The pastor lit a candle after dousing the woman in perfume...Sukura Owodunni, a 21-year-old woman, was set ablaze by Pastor Taiwo Odebiyi at his Cherubim and Seraphim Maberu Parish located in Offin...

...The pastor directed Owodunni to purchase Amazing Grace perfume, local eggs and a candle...While praying, the pastor poured the perfume on the woman and lit the candle. Owodunni immediately caught fire, sustaining severe burns to her chest, shoulder and legs...The pastor was later arrested...

...Last July, police in Nigeria rescued at least 77 people, including 23 children, whom pastors had ordered to stay in a church basement [The Whole Bible Believer Church in Valentino Area of Ondo] and wait for the rapture or to be taken to Heaven at the Second Coming of Christ.

...In June, more than 300 bodies were found in Kenya after a cult leader, Pastor Paul Mackenzie, who leads...Good News International Church, encouraged his followers to starve themselves in order to meet Jesus...to reach Heaven faster...'
(Christian Post Sept/2023)

Australian Presbyterian Church Votes Against Aboriginal Ceremonies

The Presbyterian Church of Australia has voted to not allow Aboriginal smoking ceremonies in their church 'worship services', labelling such as '*inappropriate...and inconsistent with Christian belief*'. Mark Powell, senior minister at the Cornerstone Presbyterian Church in Hobart commented: '*For any people to say they are the eternal custodians of the land, not only is it pantheism, but it is also giving yourself the right which only God himself has*' (Epoch Times 15 September 2023). Mark Powell's media discussion on this topic (and the 'Voice' referendum) is worthy of a listen to. In a day when denominational apostasy is rampant, such a stand is encouraging. This move is not without scripture when one considers the dead ancestral spirits involved in, and invited in, some of the ceremonies, with a culture that opposes Christian teaching.

Many people talk of 'apologies' but where is the forgiveness, the essence of the Gospel? Aborigines also never had a 'welcome to country' ceremony and have not been here for 65,000 years (a figure which has changed more than once).

However, as the Presbyterian statement has affirmed (and not accurately reported by the media), this does not mean we should not be concerned for, and pray for, the reconciliation and welfare of aborigine families in difficult circumstances. But the solution is not to entertain political/cultural ideas at odds with the one Holy Spirit. One solution is surely the Gospel of Christ and Christ crucified. (The full statement can be read at:

https://www.presbyterian.org.au/images/downloads/GAA_acknowledgment_of_country_Sept_23.pdf)

Terry Arnold

Illustrations - Sound and Flawed

Jesus used many illustrations in His parables. The Parable of the Sower is a masterful description of a sower sowing seed into differing grounds and the results to which Jesus explains to His disciples as differing responses to the Word of God.

Illustrations have long been used in preaching and teaching of the Word. The Puritans and those involved in various revivals and the Awakenings used illustrations to good effect. George Whitefield had a remarkable power to describe and illustrate. He almost acted out some of his illustrations and was known to often weep. At one time he was describing a poor blind beggar deserted by his dog and at the edge of a cliff. Whitefield graphically described the beggar leaning forward. A Lord Chesterfield rushed forward to *'save the beggar'* crying *'he's gone, he's gone!'* Many people actually thought they were witnessing the dramatic roles Whitefield described.

John Bunyan too is famous for his dream while in prison which was written in the second best selling book of all time - *'Pilgrim's Progress'*. This book masterfully illustrates the travels, the trials and testings of the Christian as a pilgrim passing through this world to Heaven.

However, illustrations can also be flawed and lacking Biblical application and even give a wrong understanding of some doctrines. This can amount to no less than false teaching, especially when used for the Gospel.

The following are some examples of both sound and flawed illustrations:

On the Gospel and Salvation

The Gospel Cheapened

Some years ago at Christmas the publication *'Our Daily Bread'* printed *'The Unopened Gift'* by Leslie Koh. The *'Daily Bread'* has published many sound articles and devotional thoughts which have helped thousands of Christians.

However, when it comes to Gospel presentations, there should be no apologies for ruthlessly scrutinising the texts and the illustrations. It is imperative that great discernment be applied when producing writings that purport to present the Christian Gospel. The Gospel cannot be minimised, cheapened or changed in any way. It has to be biblically accurate. This is not *our* Gospel, it's God's and Christ's Gospel (2Cor.2:12; Rom.1:9). We have been commanded to adhere to it in its fullness, deliver it to all who would hear, and never dilute it to be more palatable.

The *'Unopened Gift'* tract was an example of how the Gospel is cheapened and minimised today. An introduction stated: *'Sometimes, you almost know what to expect...chocolates, cookies...But there are times when there's a nice surprise...something handmade with the greatest love, from someone dearest to you...Under a Christmas tree...the biggest and prettiest get the most attention...they appear to promise more...Every Christmas, however, there remains one gift that many people don't open. People either miss it or forget it's there, possibly because it isn't 'glitzy' like other presents. Yet this present could*

you'll definitely die.' 'Nah! You won't die,' the serpent said to the woman, 'Truth is, God knows when you eat it, your eyes will be wide opened, He's hiding it from you, cause when you take a bite, You'll become like God Himself, knowing all things wrong from right'.

The woman saw that the tree was good for food, & also good to look at, and seeing it would make her just like God, she took some of its fruit and ate it. She also gave some to Adam, who was standing right there with her, And what did he do? the King of Zoo? Well, he took it from her...and he ate it too. Then their eyes were opened, and they realised they were naked, They sewed some leaves together and made some coverings, to hide what was once so very sacred. Instead of choosing the tree of life, they chose to choose for themselves. And see, they began to resemble trees, covered by leaves, and bearing the fruit of death ever after.

The Consequence

On that very day, the man & woman, & the beautiful world God gave them, and all the beautiful creatures within it, were plunged down into darkness. But the saddest, and most tragic part, was that God's heart was broken into a thousand pieces. His beautiful, innocent, carefree creation had been ruined by rebellious wickedness.

The man and woman were no longer what they were before, But broken, infected, and self-conscious. The only relationships they'd ever known, were now completely broken. The thing they had no knowledge of - was a poison far too potent. The serpent had lied to them and led them astray. Instead of becoming more like God, it brought them shame and decay.

What was God going to do with them? What would He do next? He said that if they ate the forbidden fruit, that death would definitely come next...

...They suddenly heard the sound of God coming, like a storm, like a breath, like a breeze, So, they ran away, for they'd gone so far astray, and hid from Him among the trees. God called out to the man and said to him, 'Adam, where are you?' He replied, 'I heard you in the garden, and I didn't want to be naked in front of You'. 'Who told you, you were naked? Did you eat from the tree I commanded you not to?' Adam blamed and claimed to be framed by the woman that God had made him. The woman, much quicker than the man - clearly thicker, pointed to the snake that outwitted her.

So, God said to the serpent, 'Because you've done this, you are cursed above all the creatures. You'll move on your belly and eat dust all your days, and I'll strip away all your heavenly features, I'll put war between you and the woman, And between your offspring and hers. The One that comes from her womb will crush your head, But you will strike his heel first.'

God then killed an animal & made clothing from its skin, To cover the nakedness of the husband & wife, a sign of the price for their sin. And then He banished the man and the woman, 'and blocked the way back to the garden, And sent them into the wilderness, no chance to plead for a pardon.

'Offspring' - a Sermon for Christmas

[The following sermon was preached December 2022 by Pastor Zac Brasch]

This is a story about darkness & light. It's a story about a war, none of us is fit to fight. It's about kings, queens, slaves, and sinners, victory, defeat, losers & winners. There are lovers & haters, talking snakes & shapeshifters. There's blood and gore, but there's beauty at its core.

It's a story about our Creator God & how He saved His creatures. Its origins are ancient, and its echoes are heard in the farthest reaches. Many who hear it will hate it, but one day all will bow the knee. It's the greatest story ever told, it's a story about you, and me.

The Beginning

In the beginning, God created a beautiful world, a paradise, full of light & life, oceans and beaches, forests, lagoons, mountains and meadows, waterfalls and dinosaurs, lions, tigers, sloths and spiders, rubies and gemstones littered the ground, silver and gold, just lying around. He filled it full of all sorts of creatures, roaming free, enjoying God's presence. It was really, really good.

God, wanted to share His love, to shine His great light within. He made out of the very clay of earth itself, man and woman, shaped with the very resemblance of Him. He spent time with them and provided food for them. He made a beautiful garden in the middle of Eden. Birds and bees, and beautiful trees, with more kinds of fruit to eat than you could imagine. It was where they lived, and where God lived too, And they'd hang out every day in the garden. He blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth with children, Rule over the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, and all the fish in the ocean'.

They were in charge of everything, the rulers of the planet. The perfect pair made to love and share, forever and ever, no limit. And here's the kicker, for this beautiful dame & her dude, Adam and Eve could do as they pleased, and they could do it all in the nude. But, there was one tree, they were not to eat from. One tree. God told them, 'You're free to eat from any other tree, but you must not eat from this one, For when you eat of it, you'll definitely die, so again I say, do not eat from this one'.

The Fall

But then one day, not very long after, this perfect pair fell into disaster. They turned on the One who had created their world and chose to follow a creature. This creature: the serpent, most cunning of all, tricked the woman to cause her fall. He twisted God's words and made her heart harden, 'Did God really say, 'don't eat from the tree in the garden?'' Instead of being Queen of all the created, the woman let a sneaky serpent pry, 'We can eat the fruit, from any tree in the garden', was her reply, 'But about the one in the middle, God said, 'Don't touch it, or,

be the best of them all. It's made just for you...given by someone who knows exactly what you want and need. It's always been there, waiting for you. And the good news is, after opening it up and taking a look inside, you don't even have to accept it. You can still think it through...'

You 'don't have to accept' the Gospel and Christ? You can 'think it through'? Where is this in scripture? Salvation is wrought by the Sovereign Lord of Glory!

The tract continues: '*Unlike the usual...this gift is custom-made...it possesses some very special qualities...a gift beyond your wildest dreams...Imagine a man born blind receiving the gift of sight...or a social outcast who finds a good friend or spouse that he can spend his life with. That's what this surprise gift is about: it exceeds your highest expectations and it meets your deepest, innermost needs'*.

The Gospel and receiving of Christ as Saviour is more than just a 'good friend or spouse' and is not about meeting our 'deepest, innermost needs'! This sets the person up for a false conversion! 'Felt needs' may be part of the fruit of the Gospel in Sanctification, but it is not the Gospel of Justification and forgiveness. The Gospel, when received, will *deliver us from sin and its consequences before an offended God who is at enmity with the sinner* (Rom.8:7; Eph.2:15,16).

'It's a gift of enduring hope. Perhaps you feel trapped by an addiction to drugs or alcohol, fear of illness, worries over a crippling mortgage...stress of a difficult job. Whatever the challenges you face in life, no matter how bad things appear, this gift offers you hope: the comfort that something can be done, the assurance that someone absolutely dependable is walking alongside, giving you the strength to face the darkest, most dangerous times in your life'...

Again, the Gospel is not for 'something to be done' about 'addictions' and 'stresses' of life, or about 'strength' to face 'your life'. It's about denying and giving away your life! (Matt.16:24-26). Fixing our life's problems is what the Holy Spirit might do in Sanctification, but this is not the Gospel of what *Christ has done* on our behalf. The Gospel is not an improvement of our life here - but *about Christ and his death for us sinners*.

'It's a gift of a fresh start. Perhaps you have made mistakes in life...you regret your actions...No matter what you've done, this gift offers you a fresh start: forgiveness and the assurance that you can move on and live a life of integrity and character, freed from old guilt and shame'.

Salvation is not just a 'fresh start'. It is a *new life, a new creation* (2Cor.5:17). We do not 'regret' our actions to receive Christ but rather we must *repent* of our sins! Regret is not required, repentance is. Scripturally, our 'regrets' are actually revealed as merely the '*sorrow of the world*' (2Cor.7:8-10) - therefore the words 'regret' and 'repent' are opposed to one another! When we receive '*forgiveness and assurance*' we do not just '*move on and live a life*'. This is arguably *cheap language* to describe what the shed blood of Christ has achieved on our behalf.

'So what's next? What is life really about? Why am I here? Imagine a gift that can answer such questions and provide a proper perspective on things - that gives you a new sense of purpose, mission and shows you what is really worth living for'.

The purpose of salvation and receiving Christ is not to have a '*proper perspective...a new sense of purpose or mission*' to '*show what is worth living for*'.

Again, the possible fruit of the Gospel through Sanctification has been confused with the Gospel itself - that God can justify the sinner because of the substitutionary work of Christ. The Gospel is not about the benefits for us, but Christ's satisfaction to God.

'...Relationships, reconciliation, companionship - all these can bring joy, peace and make life worth living. So too can this special Christmas gift. It can't be bought at a store, yet it brings more happiness than anything a shop can offer'.

Christ and the Gospel in this tract are being presented merely as 'superior' to things in the world. But the Gospel is not for the purposes of *'bringing more happiness than anything a shop can offer'*. This entices the reader to equate the 'gift' as an offer marginally better than the *'priceless gifts'* of the world.

'It's a gift from someone special...The giver can make all the difference...this special gift: it's from someone who knows you and loves you deeply, and wants only the best for you'

This gospel focuses on the love of God with little or no mention of sin, and detracts from the Gospel that tells the unsaved they are sinners under judgement. The Bible does not paint the picture of God this tract presents. The sinner must understand he is a sinner by nature and cannot pay the price for his sin.

'...It's a present you can open any time...We invite you to take a look inside, and consider accepting it...'

The Gospel and Christ are not a *'present you can open any time'*. Salvation is not cheap as to be just *'opened any time'* on human volition (2Cor.6:2; Jn.1:12,13).

'...Jesus came to show us the way to God, our Creator...and how we can best fulfil His purpose for us and live life to the fullest. Through Jesus, we will come to know who our Creator is and experience the wonderful blessings He offers to us: the fulfilment of our deepest needs; enduring hope in desperate times; a fresh opportunity to live a life of integrity; true satisfaction, meaning, and direction in life; priceless joy and peace; and deep, unconditional love...It is simply there for us to open and accept...You can tell God, your Creator, anytime 'Yes, I accept this gift. I want everything you offer'.

The Gospel, or receiving Jesus, is NOT to *'best fulfil His purpose for us and live life to the fullest'*. Nor is it about *'us, our deepest need, our life, integrity, satisfaction, direction in this life...'* It is rather *about Christ*, His life and the Father's satisfaction ('propitiation'). We do not 'open' this gift. It is rather given to us by Grace through faith, not of works or anything 'of ourselves' (Eph.2:8,9).

'Perhaps you're interested in what this gift promises, but you're not too sure if you really want to accept it. Maybe you're worried about what would happen if you do. That's fine too. But why not find out more about this gift and see if it's worth considering? Take a closer look at what this present has to offer, discover for yourself if it is able to satisfy your deepest desires, your greatest needs'.

Is this a message of true repentance? And no it's NOT *'fine'*! The 'gift' cannot be trivialised in such a way! Again, the Gospel is not primarily designed to *'satisfy your deepest desires and your greatest needs...'*

Conclusion: Some might argue this tract is only an 'ice breaker' to the Gospel. However, it still is referring to the Gospel, the 'gift' and Christ. It sets the reader

something change to a different state. It is something akin to a teabag infusing its element into water. This infusion process may also show a repeating action. However, this is not the true meaning of imputation in scripture which is a *once for all crediting of an account*.

Imputation is not a repeatable action in Scripture as shown by the Greek tenses and the various contexts. The doctrine of Imputation is in many scriptures, but no less than in Romans chapter 4 where the Greek word *'logizomai'* is mentioned 11 times (translated as *counted, reckoned, impute, credit...*).

It is essentially an accounting term and refers to the righteousness of God being *credited* to our sinful account, thus paying the penalty of sin. It is not an infusion of grace to take away sin, but a legal forensic crediting of the account with Christ having paid the sin penalty due.

The illustration showing an infusion is actually more a Roman Catholic understanding of grace being continually infused into the soul by sacraments. But Scripture has an imputation, a crediting of the believers account once and for all in time and it being found not in us but in an *alien righteousness in Christ*.

To make this illustration closer to the Word of God one would be better to use two glasses - one tainted (say coloured red) and the other a clear glass of water. We could explain that Adam's sin causes the discolouration of red. Every child comes into the world like this, as sin was imputed from Adam. However, when we truly believe who Jesus is and what He did, God imputes *His righteousness* to our account. It is like a clear glass placed in front of the stained glass. Nothing is 'infused', but rather *credited*. The clear glass is simply placed in front of the other. In ourselves we are still unrighteous, but our *standing* with God is because of the righteousness of *another* - the person and the work of Christ. The righteousness the believer now has is an 'alien righteousness' (*outside* of the discoloured glass).

Another simpler illustration of the same is to have an invoice showing millions of dollars owing on the bottom line - (something 'impossible' for us to pay - the many sins). A 'credit' note 'paid in full' is attached over the top of the invoice. The credit note signifies the work of Christ which is 'imputed' to the believers existing debt (the invoice). The idea of a *substitutionary crediting* here is important.

A Scripture is also found in Job 14:17 which some use as an illustration for this 'crediting': *'My transgression is sealed in a bag'* (Job 14:17). An illustration could be to have a filthy rag sealed in a bag and surrounded with a white robe (the 'robes of righteousness').

Illustrations should throw light, provide clarity on a subject or make clear what a speaker is teaching. But the best illustrations of all are the ones found in Scripture!

Many of today's teaching, sermons and tracts are filled with illustrations and anecdotes that barely resemble what the passage of scripture being used actually says. Overuse of man made illustrations also takes away from the Holy Spirit taking the Word of God and applying it to the heart. Illustrations that twist and change the Gospel message to suit the fallen logic or the whims of man give 'another gospel' (2Cor.11:4; Gal.1:6-9).

Terry Arnold

church of *believers*. The Saviour does not ‘*stand at man’s door, seeking admission*’. This is nonsense and diminishes the sovereignty of God in salvation. It reduces God to being impotent in His work, the power being in the hands of man’s decision and will, which contradicts many scriptures (Jn.1:13). The Saviour has not ‘*been kept outside a long time*’. And to contemplate such a person ever ‘giving up’ is to trivialise and humanise the almighty Saviour!

Yes, He is ‘*longsuffering, not willing that any should perish*’ but that scripture (2Pet.3:1-9) refers to the ‘*usward*’, the ‘*beloved*’; *not to the unsaved!* Nowhere is he like a salesman knocking and waiting for man to open the door! He rather ‘draws’ whom he wills and saves! (Jn.6:39,44,65).

Man’s ‘refusal’ is not ‘*all the more irrational*’ as this illustration says. In contrast, the Bible is clear as to why man refuses and will NOT come unless drawn by the Spirit and the Gospel! The Scriptures clearly state his heart is depraved (Jer.17:9); there are ‘*none*’ unsaved who seek God (Rom.3:10-20); unsaved minds ‘*cannot*’ be subject to God’s laws (Rom.8:7,8) because they are ‘*dead*’ in sins (Col.2:13; Eph.2:1) and are ‘*by nature*’ following their own ways, unless miraculously ‘*quicken*’ by the Spirit (Eph.2:2-5). The Scriptures teach that our ‘*understanding was darkened*’ and we were ‘*alienated from the life of God...because of the blindness of our hearts*’ (Eph.4:18); Jesus said: ‘*No man can come...except the Father...draw him*’ (Jn.6:44,65). This may all be ‘*irrational*’ to human thinking but it is God’s Word and to be believed!

The commentary closes with an illustration of a ‘*knock at the front door*’...and the person is ‘*let in*’ and this is supposed to be ‘*the Gospel in brief*’? But this is NOT the Gospel but an illustration nowhere found in scripture.

Finally the commentary does end with something that is the Gospel: ‘*It’s none other than the Lord of life and glory, the One who died as a Substitute for us and rose again the third day - the One who is now enthroned in glory and coming soon to take His people home to be with Himself*’. However, sin is not explicitly mentioned and thus what we might be *saved from* and *why* we need this Saviour.

Readers might find this critique judgemental of an innocent effort to call people to respond to Christ. But the doctrine in this commentary is nothing short of woeful. Christ is not a Saviour with his hands tied, an impotent door knocker waiting for the will of man which can never save (Jn.1:13). This does not match the all powerful Saviour who seeks and saves the lost (Matt.18:11); who draws whom he will (Jn.6:44,65) and saves to the uttermost (Heb.7:25)!

On Justification and Imputation

The Glass and Imputation

I once saw an illustration of a glass of coloured water (red for ‘sin’) and then was added a chemical which gradually caused the colour to change to clear or white. The derived meaning is that God has changed the sin to righteousness.

This illustration was deceptively wrong in that it actually illustrates ‘infusion’ rather than *imputation*. ‘Infusion’ is the adding of an agent to make the *inside* of

up to be a *shopper* of a gift that might just be better than what they have in the world? The ‘gift’ and the person of Christ are trivialised, minimised and made out to be like a genie who delivers satisfaction and fulfil ‘needs’. Nowhere is sin, the cross, the death, burial and the resurrection of Christ mentioned. The whole tract is framed in negotiable language foreign to the Gospel and scripture - which teaches we are sinners having broken God’s law and in need of Christ the Saviour, whose sacrifice has satisfied God on our behalf.

The ‘prince of preachers’, Charles Spurgeon, foresaw the rise of a modern gospel that would tickle ears and minimise the truth of sin and judgement. ‘*There are many points and particulars in which the Gospel is offensive to human nature, revolting to the pride of the creature. It was not intended to please man...Why should He devise a gospel to suit the whim of our poor fallen human nature? He intended to save men, He never intended to gratify their depraved tastes*’.

‘*Do men really believe that there is a gospel for each century? Or a religion for each fifty years? Will there be in Heaven saints saved according to a score sorts of gospel? Will these agree together to sing the same song? And what will the song be? Saved on different footings, and believing different doctrines, will they enjoy eternal concord, or will Heaven itself be only a new arena for disputation between varieties of faiths?*’.

‘*If we felt at liberty to leave out something, we should naturally omit that which is offensive, and away would go the tooth and edge of the Gospel. That which is offensive in the Gospel is just that which is effective. What men oppose... God uses*’.

The Drowning Man

The following is an excerpt from the *Berean Call* (USA), April/2011. To a question ‘*What verses point to ‘free will’ in the Bible?*’, the *Berean Call* first responded with the following scriptures - Gen.3:1-6; Josh.24:15; Matt.11:28; Jn.3:16 - none of which teach a freedom of the will except Genesis 3:1-6 (before the Fall). Then followed the following illustration: ‘*The exhausted, drowning man, who hears the voice of those in the boat, cries out, ‘save me’, and then permits the strong arms of his rescuer to pull him into the boat, has certainly done nothing to contribute to his salvation. Yet we know some drowning men will push away their rescuers in their unreasoning panic. In each case, both are exercising choice...*’

This is a terrible analogy for salvation. I spent decades as a phys-ed and swim teacher. I trained many in how to save drowning people and twice was involved in saving children in difficulties. I have yet to see a drowning person who does not want to be saved and who will ‘*push away their rescuers*’. In contrast they will latch onto a rescuer, sometimes endangering both lives. (Techniques are used in rescuing so as not to cause both people to be drowned). There are not ‘*two choices*’ here! Secondly, the Bible is clear that unsaved man does not seek or choose God unless the Holy Spirit first draws him (Eph.1:4,5; Jn.15:16; Rom.3:11; Lk.19:10; Rom.8:6,7; Rom.3:10-11; Jer.17:9; Is.64:6,7). This analogy is hopelessly flawed both in the illustration itself and then in the application to scripture and salvation.

The drowning man does not know he is drowning in sin until the Spirit

illuminates, draws and shows the law broken. There is no 'choice' here, unless the Spirit rescues by drawing the person and changing his will to see salvation.

The Judge and the Prisoner

In this illustration a person is sentenced to death row but later a judge offers the man a full pardon and his release. The illustration goes on to state that the guilty person can either accept the governor's pardon and go free, or reject his offer and remain in prison to be executed. Attempting to get closer to scripture the illustration then has the judge execute a willing innocent man willing to die in the place of the guilty prisoner. Then the full pardon can be extended.

This illustration is far from the God of the Bible who does not overlook the sins of the sinner. This is also not how God offers salvation. There is no full pardon that ignores sin or a double payment for sin. And is God really like the judge who executes one man for the other? But the most appalling part of the illustration here is that the criminal could reject the Judges pardon! Firstly, Scripture has *all people* initially not seeking pardon from God (Rom.3:11). Their enslaved wills (Jn.8:34; Rom.6:16-22; Eph.2:2-5) will not come to Christ (Rom.8:7; 1Cor.2:14), and indeed cannot accept the Christ of salvation without the Holy Spirit first showing them sin and the pardon for, and convicting, drawing them so their will is changed (Jn.6:44).

Nowhere in scripture will one find a person approached by God to come to Christ who rejects it! This is opposite to what the Father does (Jn.6:37-39,44,65).

To improve the illustration would be to have *all of us criminals on death row* (Rom.3:10,23) who were willingly rejecting in heart the judges salvation plan. Then to have the judge himself make us willing to come. Only then could it come near to '*by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast*' (Eph. 2:8-9).

The Rescue of the Man in the Pit

A similar illustration to the above sometimes used is the helpless man in the bottom of the pit who cannot escape. A rescuer dangles a rope down for the man to climb out. The man can choose the rope and rescue or choose to stay in the pit. This is supposedly a picture of Christ saving someone from their sinful state.

The problem here again is that the scenario is unreal. Who would not want to be rescued? But when matched with scripture this illustration is also seriously flawed. Firstly, the man in the pit is not able or spiritually alive to take the rope unless he is awakened to his dilemma (Rom.8:7; 1Cor.2:14). He would in fact be a *corpse* knowing nothing (Eph.2:1,5; Col.2:13)! Secondly, again Christ does not fail in any who He comes to save (Lk.19:10; Jn.6:37-40,44,65).

To possibly make this illustration closer to what God says of the man, they would be *dead*, not knowing anything (Eph.2:1,5; Col.2:13). Then God would get down into the pit and breath life into the desperately wicked heart of a dead corpse! (Jer.17:9; Acts 16:14). He would then take them out of the pit and clean them

(Sanctification - 1Thess.4:3; 2Thess.2:13; Phil.2:13; 1Pet.1:2).

Both illustrations above are man centred and assuming man has some innate power to see his plight. But again unless the Holy Spirit illuminates, draws, convicts, the person will remain a slave to and 'dead in sins' (Jn.6:16-22; Eph.2:1,5; Col.2:13), his mind blinded by Satan (2Cor.4:4), and needing to be set 'free' (Jn.8:36). The setting free is the opening of the heart to attend to and follow Christ as depicted in Acts 16:14 when Lydia '*whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul*'.

An Impotent Saviour?

'Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me' (Rev.3:20).

Here we are at the close of another year, and still the patient Savior stands at man's door, seeking admission. He has been kept outside a long time. Anyone else would have given up long ago and gone home. But not the Saviour. He is longsuffering, not willing that any should perish. He waits with hope that one day the door will be flung open and He will be welcomed inside.

It is amazing that anyone would fail to answer the knock of the Lord Jesus. If it were a neighbour, the door would be opened promptly. If it were a salesman, someone would at least give him the courtesy of opening the door, saying, 'We don't need any!'...If it were the President or the Governor, the family would compete for the privilege of welcoming him. Strange, then, that when the Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer stands at the door, He is given the cold, silent treatment.

Man's refusal is all the more irrational when we realize that the Lord Jesus does not come to rob but rather to give. He comes to give life more abundant.

A Christian radio preacher once got a late night call from a listener who wanted to stop by for a brief visit. The preacher tried every excuse to dissuade him, but finally relented...The visitor came with a large gift of money to help with the radio expenses. After he left, the preacher said, 'I'm so glad I let him in'.

Joe Blinco used to describe a scene where an animated conversation was going on in the living room of a home. Suddenly there was a knock at the front door. One family said, 'There's someone at the door'. Another jumped up, went to the door, and opened it. Then someone in the living room asked, 'Who is it?' From the door came the answer. Finally the head of the house shouted, 'Tell him to come in'.

That is the gospel in brief. Listen! There's Someone at the door. Who is it? It's none other than the Lord of life and glory, the One who died as a Substitute for us and rose again the third day - the One who is now enthroned in glory and coming soon to take His people home to be with Himself. Tell Him to come in!

(William MacDonald, *One Day at a Time* (Gospel Folio Press: Colborne, ON, 1998) cited in the *Berean Call*, 1/1/2016)

The errors in this are serious, considering it is about the *person* and work of Jesus in the Gospel of salvation itself, as the article itself claims.

Revelation 3:20 has nothing to do with the unsaved! It specifically is to a