

## Taste and See Part 1

Dave Hunt

We have discussed in the past the deadly religious materialism known as sacramentalism: the belief that material things and rituals channel God's grace and spiritual power to men. Such is the serious error of "transubstantiation," the idea that the Roman Catholic clergy can and must change wafers and wine into the body and blood of Christ to make the "Sacrifice of the Mass" effective. That Church damns to hell all who reject this dogma: "If anyone says that by the sacraments of the New Law grace is not conferred *ex opere operato* [by the act itself], but that faith alone in the divine promise is sufficient to obtain grace, let him be anathema [eternally damned]." This "New Law" comprises 1,739 rules in more than 1,000 pages of the Vatican's *Code of Canon Law*.

The Bible, however, teaches that God's grace, whether in salvation, sanctification, or provision for living to His glory, comes to man by faith: "By grace are ye saved through faith" (Eph 2:8); "the just shall live by his faith" (Hab 2:4; Heb 10:38); "we walk by faith" (2 Cor 5:7), etc. Physical things of this world may *illustrate*, but they cannot *substitute for or play the part of*, the spiritual realities of God and of His grace, which one can only receive by faith.

Such is also the error of "baptismal regeneration": the belief that baptism has efficacious power and is *essential* for salvation. Not only Catholics, but generally Lutherans, Calvinists, and others also partake in varying degrees of this heresy through the practice of infant baptism. We have quoted Luther's small catechism (followed by every Lutheran group today, including the Missouri Synod): "Holy Baptism is the only means whereby infants...can ordinarily be regenerated...it works forgiveness of sins...delivers from death and the devil [and] gives eternal salvation..." Calvin said, "God in baptism promises remission of sins...regenerating us...makes us his by adoption...let us therefore embrace it in faith."

On the contrary, there is no *spiritual power* in water (or anything physical) or

in its "sacramental" use. Man is not just a body, but eternal soul and spirit—yet this world gives the dying body all of the attention. Sadly, this is also true to a large extent among professing Christians. Such religious materialism robs its followers of truth and life.

We need *spiritual* life—and *physical* things or ceremonies involving them are not the means to this end! One might just as well trust in the "good luck" of a rabbit's foot as to hope for spiritual benefit from a Catholic scapular, medal, crucifix, or relic of an alleged "saint." And how much "worship" is created by the lordly pastoral robes and other religious accoutrements even in evangelical churches? As Christ said, true worship of God can only be in "spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:24).

Yes, there was a physical tabernacle (which became Solomon's temple) that contained special objects used by the

**Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.**

*Romans 3:28*

priests in worship and service before God. But these were specifically designed by God for the Jews as "patterns of things in the heavens...the figures of the true" (Heb 9:23-24). Far from there being any spiritual value in those objects and sacraments themselves, they were "a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect...[but were] carnal ordinances, imposed...until the time of reformation" (Heb 9:9,10). That time came nearly 2,000 years ago with the fulfillment of these types in the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.

These all pictured various aspects of the coming sacrifice of Christ through which alone forgiveness of sins, salvation, and reconciliation to God could come. These "carnal ordinances" were done away after Christ had fulfilled them: "But Christ...[not] by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood...is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are

the figures of the true; but into heaven itself...Nor yet that he should offer himself often...for then must he often have suffered...but now once...he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb 9:11-28). Thus, the inner "veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom" (Mt 27:51) the moment Christ's sacrifice on the cross was complete.

Hebrews chapter 10 declares that the fact that Old Testament sacrifices had to be repeated day after day proved that they could never pay the penalty for man's sins. The writer argues, "For then would they not have ceased to be offered?" (10:1,2). Nor can the Roman Catholic "sacrifice of the Mass" pay for sins, as its endless repetition proves.

These Old Testament representations are then contrasted with the true sacrifice of Christ: "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God...by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified...there is [therefore] no more offering for sin" (10:12-18). Our Lord's cry from the cross, "It is finished," was His triumphant declaration that He had paid the full penalty for the sins of the world!

One either accepts Christ's payment and the forgiveness and home in heaven He purchased with His blood and offers to all who will receive Him, or rejects Him and spends eternity in the lake of fire, personally bearing God's infinite judgment.

To accept Christ's payment, one must *believe* on Christ: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31); "by grace are ye saved through faith" (Eph 2:8). Believe what? The gospel: "that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures...was buried, and...rose again the third day according to the scriptures..." (1 Cor 15:1-4). The gospel alone is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom 1:16).

These simple and familiar truths are forgotten, compromised, perverted, and corrupted among many who claim to be "born-again evangelicals"—and even despised today as too boring to attract youth. But this "sound doctrine" is (1 Tm 1:10; 2 Tm 3:16; 4:2-5; Ti 2:1) essential to "life and godliness" (2 Pt 1:3). For this we must "earnestly contend" (Jude 3); it is our life!

But how is “sound doctrine” related to the simplicity of the gospel?

For Christ to fulfill the hundreds of Old Testament prophecies as proof that He was the promised Messiah, and to pay the infinite penalty for all mankind, He had to qualify in a very special and vital way: He must be eternally God, without beginning or end; the One who became and *is* forever, through the virgin birth, a true flesh-and-blood man—God “manifest in the flesh” (1 Tm 3:16).

Jesus clearly declared the necessity of believing that He is God: “if ye believe not that I am [i.e., the I AM of Ex 3:14—he is in italics, added by the translators], ye shall die in your sins [and] whither I go, ye cannot come” (Jn 8:24, 21). Yet there are thousands of those who claim to be “born-again” Christians who deny that Christ is God. They are not Christians. By Christ’s own words, they will not be with Him in heaven. We must warn them!

Christ makes clear the necessity of believing that He is both God and a real flesh-and-blood man: “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you” (Jn 6:53). *Eat His flesh, drink His blood?* Could He have meant that *literally*? In fact, “eating” and drinking” are metaphors for coming to Christ and believing on Him: (Jn 6:35, 40, 47-51). This can only be what He meant by, “he that eateth me, even he shall live by me” (6:57).

Catholics, Lutherans, and many Calvinists take this statement to mean that the physical body and blood of Christ must be ingested into the stomach. This is supposedly possible for Catholics through the magic of “transubstantiation,” for Lutherans through “consubstantiation” (i.e., that the bread and wine simply *are* Christ’s physical body and blood), while Calvin taught that the ingested bread and wine impart Christ’s physical body and blood to believers.

The error, though lethal, is simple: failure to realize that Christ, as always when speaking to the multitude (Mt 13:34), was teaching spiritual truth through a physical illustration. When He said, “I am the light of the world” (Jn 8:12), or “I am the door” (Jn 10:7), or “I am the good shepherd” (Jn 10:14), or “I am the true vine” (Jn 15:1), did anyone who heard Him then, or should anyone now, imagine that He was speaking literally? Of course not—and for good reason! For Christ to be a literal, physical light, door, shepherd, grapevine, piece of bread, etc., would not only be absurd but of *no spiritual and eternal benefit* to anyone!

Thus when Christ said, “I am the bread

of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (Jn 6:35), Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists all admit that He didn’t mean He was a physical loaf of bread. Nor could he have been speaking of *physical* hunger or thirst. Obviously, then, when He went on to say, “This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die” (Jn 6:50), He neither meant physical bread nor physical death nor physical eating. He was communicating eternal spiritual truth.

So it must be also when He said, “I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (6:51), “Living bread” is clearly a metaphor, as is His statement that this “living bread” is His “flesh.” Clearly, the “eating” is symbolic of believing that “Jesus Christ is come [once and for all] in the flesh” (1 Jn 4:2,3). He is both God and man in genuine human flesh. That much should be clear.

Yet when Christ goes on in the same breath to say, “Except ye eat the flesh of

wine in their stomachs!

That same misunderstanding caused the Jews to complain, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” (Jn 6:52). Rome thinks it solves the dilemma through transubstantiation, so that the body and blood of Christ are ingested “under the appearance of bread and wine.” But Christ made it clear that He was speaking *spiritual* truth: “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (6:63). Words and the ideas they express are not physical but spiritual.

Satan turns man to the physical and blinds him to the spiritual. God explained to the Jews that He caused them to hunger in the wilderness in order to teach them that “man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord...” (Dt 8:3). Israel failed the test and was so completely absorbed in physical lust that she missed entirely the *spiritual* reality God wanted His people to enjoy: “My people have...forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns...that can hold no water” (Jer 2:13).

In contrast to Israel’s failure, Christ in His temptation in the wilderness did not yield to Satan’s promises of earth’s kingdoms with their possessions and power. He quoted the liberating truth, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God” (Lk 4:4). This is the Word upon which we are to “meditate day and night” (Ps 1:2), by which we are “born again...which by the gospel is preached” (1 Pt 1:23, 25).

Christ declared that He was the living word and that all of the Word of God spoke of Him. No wonder Jeremiah said: “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart...” (Jer 15:16). We need, moment by moment, to heed the Psalmist: “O taste and see that the Lord is good...” (Ps 34:8)! We, too, would then cry out, “My soul thirsteth for God...” (Ps 42:2). For some “holy water” that He offers? No, but for a deeper knowledge of Himself!

May Paul’s passion be ours: “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death...” (Phil 3:10)!

We want to come back to this theme again next month. In the meantime, let us meditate day and night upon Christ and upon the Father and His Word. In the process, we will discover that we are “feasting on the living bread [and] drinking at the fountainhead,” as the old hymn says. **TBC**

**Therefore being justified by faith,  
we have peace with God through  
our Lord Jesus Christ.**

*Romans 5:1*

the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you” (Jn 6:53), Rome insists that He means literally eating and drinking His physical body and blood! But His blood was poured out for sin on the cross and His resurrected body has no blood in it for anyone to drink. Nor could anyone “eat” His resurrected, glorified body that He inhabits at the Father’s right hand. And to imagine putting Him back in His pre-resurrection body so He can be physically “eaten” is to engage in fantasy and blasphemy! Furthermore, to ingest Christ’s physical body and blood into one’s stomach would no more bring spiritual life than to ingest any physical food.

Yet Rome declares that although Christ is at the Father’s right hand, her priests can bring Him back in His pre-crucifixion body onto Catholic altars to be “immolated” (made to suffer His sacrifice on the cross) again and again for sin. That grievous error robs those who believe it of the spiritual truth and eternal salvation Christ offers—and gives them instead bread and

## Quotable

A good many are kept out of the service of Christ, deprived of the luxury of working for God, because they are trying to do some great thing. Let us be willing to do little things. And let us remember that nothing is small in which God is the source.

*D.L. Moody*

Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.

*John Wesley*

Light after darkness, gain after loss,  
Strength after suffering, crown after cross.  
Sweet after bitter, song after sigh,  
Home after wandering, praise after cry.

Sheaves after sowing, sun after rain,  
Sight after mystery, peace after pain.  
Joy after sorrow, calm after blast,  
Rest after weariness, sweet rest at last.

Near after distant, gleam after gloom,  
Love after loneliness, life after tomb.  
After long agony, rapture of bliss!  
Right was the pathway leading to this!

*Francis Ridley Havergal*

## Q&A

**Question:** I've heard it said that 2 Peter 3:10-12 gives proof that the Bible is scientifically infallible, contrary to what the Roman Catholic Church teaches. All I want to know is how those verses give that proof.

**Answer:** These verses refer to the destruction of this present universe in order to create a "new heavens and new earth." The means of destruction is described specifically as the universe being "dissolved" in a "fervent heat" that will burn up the very *elements*. The English "dissolved" is translated from the Greek *luo*, which is found 46 times in 40 verses in the New Testament. Taken together, these 46 usages consistently indicate that the meaning of this word is a loosing, letting go, or undoing of something that otherwise is held together or in place—a scientifically accurate description of the loosing of the force that holds the nucleus of the atom together.

All matter is made of atoms, which consist of negatively charged electrons orbiting around a nucleus composed of positively charged protons and neutrally charged neutrons. Of course, the negatively charged electrons are held in orbit by the positively charged protons because

of the electro-magnetic attraction between positive and negative charges. But since like charges repel one another, what holds the nucleus together, since it is composed of positively charged protons?

Physicists have hypothesized what they call the "strong force," which overcomes the electromagnetic repulsion that otherwise would push the protons apart and destroy the nucleus of the atom. Without this mysterious force, the entire universe would dissolve in one giant ball of fire—exactly what Peter describes. Colossians 1:17 says that everything consists in Christ, held together by His power (i.e., "strong force"). If He lets go of the atom, the present universe will cease to exist.

The Greek word Peter uses describes the way science indicates the universe would be destroyed—by loosing the protons from the force that binds them together and thus dissolving the atom itself. It may be going too far to suggest that these verses in themselves offer proof of the scientific validity of the Bible, but when one puts them together with many other verses we certainly do have that proof.

The greatest proof, of course, is prophecy fulfilled. This is what God himself points to as proof of His existence and that the Bible is His Word (Is 46:9-10, etc.)—and that Jesus Christ, the Living Word of God, is the true Messiah and only Savior of the world. The theories and explanations of science change, but God's Word never changes—and prophecy fulfilled is an objective fact that cannot be denied.

**Question:** Most of your arguments against Calvinism hang on the false idea that man must have a free will in order to love God, to receive His love, and to love others. Man can choose to receive or reject Christ, and thus decide his own eternal destiny. If that is true, then we have a serious problem: Will man lose his free will in heaven? If not, what would prevent someone from deciding to rebel in heaven? After all, Satan was the most beautiful, powerful, intelligent being ever created. All he knew was the presence of God—yet he rebelled!

**Answer:** You pose an important question. However, Satan was never redeemed with the blood of Christ, so he had no basis for loving God or for gratitude to Christ for dying in his place.

In contrast, the love of God and the sacrifice of Christ will ever be before the redeemed. Our Savior will throughout eternity bear the marks of Calvary, reminding us of the infinite price He paid in love for our redemption. The very throne in heaven is forever "the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev. 22:1). Thus we could never lose

our love and gratitude for Him founded upon His loving payment for our sins.

Nor was Satan ever born again and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. He is a special case, with no possible comparison to the redeemed. Christ is in us ("Christ in you, the hope of glory" — Col 1:27) and we are in Him ("created in Christ Jesus unto good works" — Eph 2:10). The Christian is "in Christ...a new creature: old things are passed away...all things are become new. And all things are of God" (2 Cor 5:17,18). Sometimes we don't live like new creatures in Christ or as if Christ were in us and we in Him—but everything here on earth that prevents us from fully realizing the perfection into which we have been created anew in Christ will no longer be present in heaven.

There won't be any temptation to sin, no reason to rebel against our loving God and Savior; it wouldn't make sense. Furthermore, Satan himself is the great tempter of men—and he will have no access to heaven or to our thoughts.

You may respond, "But no one tempted Satan! The Bible never says we must be tempted, but that 'every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed' (Jas 1:14). What could prevent our own lust from enticing us in heaven?"

Scripture explains that the flesh lusts against the Spirit "so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal 5:17). This is what Paul meant when he said, "For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do...[because of] the law of sin which is in my members [body]" (Rom 7:19-23).

Describing this inner conflict as the reason why Christians sometime sin, Paul expresses the frustration of one who loves his Lord and wants only to please Him, but fails in the flesh: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin" (Rom 7:24,25).

In heaven, we will no longer be in these bodies of sinful flesh that are in conflict with the indwelling Holy Spirit. We will be in resurrection bodies like Christ's. For the new creatures in Christ, there will be no more temptation to sin. Then, at last, we will experience the fullness of what John wrote: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin...he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 Jn 3:9).

**Question:** At our Bible study last night here in prison we were talking about all believers appearing before the judgment seat of Christ to have their works judged. The study book we were using said that this judgment will take place after the rapture of the church and uses



**1 Thessalonians 4:14-17 to support this. I've always believed this myself but now I'm wondering, why can't the believer appear before the judgment seat of Christ after death rather than waiting for the Rapture?**

**Answer:** Perhaps there is a simple misunderstanding. I don't know the study book, but doubt that it indicates that those who die are waiting in heaven for the Rapture to occur so their works can be judged. Is this stated specifically? If so, another reference should have been given.

It is obvious that those who are alive at the Rapture can only appear before the judgment seat of Christ *after* they have been taken to heaven. Thus it would seem odd to make a point of a post-rapture judgment, if the study book does so. There is no reason, however, why those who have died would not be judged by our Lord immediately upon being taken into His presence. Certainly the idea that they must wait until everyone arrives in heaven cannot be derived from the proof text you say is given.

A scripture that might be interpreted as teaching a post-rapture judgment of the redeemed would be where Paul declares that everyone's works will be tried by fire to determine individual rewards: "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it" (1 Cor 3:13). If "the day" refers to a specific day for all believers, then that would indicate judgment after the Rapture for all. But if "the day" refers to a *personal* time of judgment for each person, then the judgment would occur upon death.

**Question: Isaiah 65 from verse 17 onwards seems to be about the Millennium. You have said, "Israel is the earthly people and kingdom; the church is the heavenly." Does this mean there will be no church during the Millennium? I had always assumed I would be there. Am I wrong?**

**Answer:** The Rapture of the church marks the beginning of the seven years of great tribulation, after which the Millennium begins. I believe that all, whether Jews or Gentiles, who have believed on Christ, either prior to or during the Great Tribulation, but before His visible return at the Second Coming, make up the church—the heavenly people. Those who only believe in Christ upon seeing Him return to earth in power and glory to destroy Antichrist and his kingdom will remain on earth into the Millennium—and for eternity will be the earthly people.

Included in the Rapture and first resurrection, then, would be the Old Testament

saints, whether Jew or Gentile. Those who "sleep in Jesus" [i.e. have died in faith in Christ and whose souls and spirits have been in heaven with Him] will Christ "bring with him" (1 Thes 4:14) to be reunited with their resurrected bodies. They and those still alive at that time will be "caught up together...to meet the Lord in the air" (4:17), and Christ will then take them to His Father's "house [of] many mansions" as He promised in John 14:2-3.

When Christ's feet touch the Mount of Olives at the Second Coming (Zec 14:4) He brings "all the saints" from heaven with Him. It is inconceivable that Abraham, David, Daniel, Isaiah, et al., are not among the "saints" in heaven and who come with Christ as part of the armies of heaven to destroy Antichrist and his kingdom and to reign with Him during the Millennium. When were their souls and spirits clothed with new bodies to accompany Christ at His second coming? That could only have been at the resurrection of those who "sleep in Jesus" and the Rapture of 1 Thessalonians 4.

The statement, "this is the first resurrection" (Rv 20:5) refers only to those "beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God [i.e., were martyred under Antichrist]." What about the rest of the redeemed who died prior to the Great Tribulation? They couldn't be resurrected at the end of the Great Tribulation because they don't qualify as martyrs killed by Antichrist. This is one more reason for a pre-trib rapture.

Thus the phrase "the first resurrection" can only mean the completion of the resurrection that occurred at the Rapture—which could only have been prior to the Great Tribulation: otherwise, there is no resurrection of anyone except those who are killed by Antichrist. That these martyrs are included in "the first resurrection" would mean that they are part of the church, the heavenly people.

Those who come to faith in Christ only as a result of seeing Him at the Second Coming obviously are not killed (and thus not resurrected) but will remain alive into the Millennium and will live forever on earth. They are the earthly people for eternity. They will receive new bodies at the time this present universe is destroyed and the new heavens and new earth are created.

The church will also be on earth during the Millennium, but not as participants in earthly affairs. They will reign with Christ over the earthly people.

## News Alert

**Omaha World Herald, 6/24/2004:** Washington—More than a dozen lawmakers attended a congressional reception this year honoring the Rev. Sun Myung Moon where

he declared himself the Messiah and said his teachings have helped Hitler and Stalin be "reborn as new persons."

At the March 23 ceremony in the Dirksen Senate Office Building, Rep. Danny Davis, D-Ill., wore white gloves and carried a pillow holding an ornate crown that was placed on Moon's head. The Korean-born businessman and religious leader then delivered a long speech saying he was "sent to earth...to save the world's six billion people....Emperors, kings and presidents...have declared to all Heaven and Earth the Rev. Sun Myung Moon is none other than humanity's Savior, Messiah, Returning Lord and True Parent."

Moon, 85, has been controversial. Renowned for officiating at mass weddings, he received an 18-month prison sentence in 1982 for tax fraud and conspiracy to obstruct justice.

Among the more than 300 people who attended all or part of the ceremony was Sen. Mark Dayton, D-Minn., who now says he was honoring a constituent receiving a peace award and did not know Moon would be there.

The event's organizers flew in nearly 100 honorees from all 50 states to receive state and national peace awards. The only "international crown of peace awards" went to Moon and his wife.

**JESUS ACTOR MISTAKEN FOR THE REAL DEAL (www.ananova.com, 7/6/04):** James Caviezel has been swamped with requests to perform miracles by Mexican fans who believe he really is Jesus Christ.

The 35-year-old actor, who played Jesus in Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, was on a one-week tour of the east Mexican state of Veracruz. According to Mexican newspaper "Reforma," dozens of residents from villages throughout the state, one of the poorest in the country, asked Caviezel to heal the sick and perform other miracles as he passed through.

The actor, who is himself a strict Catholic, said: "The belief of these people really moved me. It was a shock for me to see how they came up to me to ask for my help. I had to explain to them that I was only an actor, and wasn't really the son of God."

Mexico has the biggest population of Catholics in the world after Brazil and has been visited by the Pope five times.

*[“For all of the ‘missions-oriented’ enthusiasm generated by evangelical leaders for The Passion of the Christ, they have disregarded the reality that the movie does nothing to dissuade Catholics from their Church’s false gospel that can save no one.”—T.A. McMahon]*

## Dave's Itinerary

Aug-Sept	New Zealand, Australia www.theberean.org
	New Zealand Coordinator Sam Cope - +64 (0)9528 4061
	National Coordinator John Odell - +61 (0) 2 9869 7164
Sept. 24-25	Olive Tree Ministries & Jan Markell Arden Hills MN (763) 493-3010 www.olivetreeviews.org
Sept. 29- Oct. 1	Winnipeg Prophecy Conference Winnipeg MB Canada (204) 888-7270 (204) 889-8099 (204) 853-7786 www.wpgpc.com
Oct. 3	Berean Baptist Church Winnipeg MB Canada (204) 837-3699
Oct. 9-14	Calvary Gospel Chapel Southampton, Bermuda 011 44 234-3250
Oct. 20-23 25-28	Congresso Chamada Brazil Pocos de Caldas Campina Grande 011 55 51 3241-5050 from the USA 0300 789-5152 only in Brazil www.Chamada.com.br

## Letters

Dear Brother Dave,

I can say somewhat with relish that you are pretty much anathema here.... You are called "that trouble maker." Tragically, the growth here is radically away from the inerrant Word and increasingly toward experiential "Christianity" with advertised healings, creature comforts, wealth, etc.... Perpetual kudos for raising [Christ's] true banner of love in the midst of so much latter-day confusion and delusion. JD (NY)

Dear Bereans,

The book *What Love Is This?* was a great help to me. A Calvinist taught me TULIP from the very beginning. I read other books than Calvinistic ones and became more and more confused. But after reading *What Love Is This?* my grave concerns vanished instantly.... I became a free person, able to see God as an "all-humans-loving" God who gave us a free will to choose between darkness and light. I know He is not a respecter of persons, and every one of us is personally accountable to Him. AR (Germany)

Dear Bereans,

I wasted my money watching *The Passion*. All I needed to do was to wait for Dave's article "Christ Died for Our Sins" (June 2004) to remind me once again of the pure Word of Scripture—nothing added—nothing taken away. Oh that we would just allow the Holy Spirit to teach us the truths of the Scriptures. Being taught by Him, we would all be of one mind, of one Spirit. LC (WA)

Dear Mr. Hunt,

I enjoyed reading *Debating Calvinism*. I sat in the Calvinist camp for many years.... Why don't Calvinists preach their "doctrines of grace" to the unsaved? Why are they hiding this doctrine they so fervently believe? [They should say] plainly, "If you're not one of the elect, you will not be saved. There is nothing you can do about it, and you'll spend eternity in the lake of fire." They live and breathe this doctrine; they all but condemn Christians who don't believe in it, yet when it comes time to witness, they say along with Paul and Silas, "believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved." Stop lying to people and tell them there is nothing they can do! Yet this is a hidden doctrine only for the intellectual.... At one time I would have died for the Calvinist doctrine. It eventually divided my family, split friendships and plummeted me into despair.... My advice is to pursue Jesus, not Calvinism. It will consume your Christian walk. Let it go. JLG (PA)

Dear Sirs,

I just read your *TBC* for June. After reading the letter from MC about how you "bash" the seeker friendly church I felt I had to write. We visited [Willow Creek] three times and never once heard the Gospel, not one time. We heard music and drama—lots of it—but never heard the Gospel. If we had gone there unsaved, we never would have known that we were unsaved.... Maybe MC believes this is the way the church is supposed to operate, but I do not see that anywhere in the Scriptures. GM (IL)

T. A. McMahon,

Remove us from your mailing list. We have always respected *TBC*'s undaunting commitment to biblical accuracy, the good strong mind God has blessed both you and Dave Hunt with, and the ability to speak and write with clarity.... However, I do not believe the style of worship a Christian church uses... or the songs they sing are part of this calling to expose errors. I believe that a spirit has deceived you from your calling into bringing constant needless and unholy criticism against the Body of Christ that is based solely on your personal preferences.... Your nonstop list of symptoms that warrants a church earning your disapproval rating makes it very hard to imagine what an "approved church" is allowed to do, other than sing hymns written in the 1800s.... [You have] a total lack of respect for the Word of God and your fellow brothers in the Lord. One example is your belief that James Dobson is a heretic because he is a psychologist.... I do not see one ounce of true "Berean spirit" in this ministry. IL (NH)

## TBC Notes

### Dave's Dilemma

We covet your prayers for Dave as he takes off on a rather extensive international speaking schedule. He will be gone most of the time from August through December.

Another way you can help Dave during this time period is to refrain from writing specifically to him. We're trying to eliminate the stacks of mail that usually await his return (which are not the best of homecoming items!). We'll do the best we can regarding answers to your questions.

### Are Your Bibles Collecting Dust?

We hope you're not letting that happen to your favorite Bible. But if you happen to have some extra used Bibles around your house that aren't being utilized, we know of a ministry that will distribute them to people who would be very excited to receive an English Bible. Some are so desperate to read the Word that to receive even a page or two is a sheer delight.

The Bibles will be freely disbursed to hospitals, nursing homes, rescue missions, prisons, homeless shelters, street ministries, remote villages, refugee camps, railway and bus stations, etc. The Bible Foundation Ministry reports the transforming power of God's Word through the many letters it has received. One such letter from Nigeria, after a raid in which Muslims destroyed the homes and possessions of those who confessed faith in Christ, reads, "Our solemn need now is to provide these dear converts, whose Bibles were burnt and personal belonging confiscated, with some boxes of Holy Bibles."

You may send your extra Bibles directly to Bible Foundation, c/o G7 Plant Services, 1101 N Villa Rd, Newberg, OR 97132, or go to their website for more information: [www.bf.org/bibledrive](http://www.bf.org/bibledrive). They can be also be reached by email at [bf@bf.org](mailto:bf@bf.org).

T.A. McMahon  
Executive Director

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## **Explaining the Bible Away**

**By William McDonald**

**W**hen we as believers come to verses of Scripture that are hard for us to accept, it is very easy to invent clever ways of avoiding their cutting edge. This is especially true when we are faced with the stern demands of Christian discipleship. We argue, we rationalize, we evade; we come up with sixty theological reasons why the Bible doesn't mean what it says. By

the time we get through, there isn't enough left to make soup for a sick grasshopper, as Spurgeon would say. Well, maybe not sixty theological reasons, but quite a few. Let me share some of them with you.

**It couldn't mean that literally.**

Why not? One of the basic rules of Bible interpretation is, "If the first sense makes sense, don't look for any other sense." Darby said, "Cream lies on the surface. I do not care for novel interpretations of Scripture." And he wouldn't care for any that left nothing but skim milk.

**We've never done it that way.**

This is the argument of tradition. Jesus warned that it is possible to make the Word of God of no effect through our traditions (Mark 7:13). If we've never done it that way in the past, then let us change and begin right now.

**I know that's what the Bible says, but in my case, God wants to make an exception.**

No, He doesn't. He wants you to obey Him. There is no blessing for anyone who handles the Word with such specious reasoning. You may fudge, but the Word won't budge.

**That was just for Paul's day (or the days of the early church).**

This is the argument from culture. It is man's attempt to bend the Bible to fit the culture. It won't work. Better to bend the culture to fit the Word. Once you adopt the culture argument, you can explain away...anything you don't like. Some of Paul's teachings are now considered culturally irrelevant. Really! Then why does he go back to creation to justify them?

Why does he say, "Because of the angels?" Just the angels of some specific culture? Nonsense. Bible teachers should be able to do better than that.

**God knows I have to live, doesn't He?**

Spurgeon answered this excuse deftly. He had been pressing the terms of discipleship on a young man. When the fellow bleated, "I have to live, don't I?" C.H.S. said, "I don't grant that. We have to obey God." Who said we have to live? He who loves his life will lose it. We should "fling our souls and bodies down for God to plow them under."

**You have to be prudent (to use common sense).**

There is something better than prudence and common sense, namely, divine wisdom. God's ways are higher than our ways. His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. Obey His Word, even if it doesn't seem correct, and you will find that His way is perfect.

**These verses reveal Paul's prejudices. After all, he was a male chauvinist, a woman hater.**

I wonder if people who talk like this realize that they are making a frontal attack on the inspiration of the Scriptures. The things that Paul wrote are the commandments of the Lord. They are just as inspired as the words of Jesus.

**You shouldn't do it if it would offend someone.**

How can people invent such idiocy? If we must avoid offending, then we must stop preaching the cross. The entire gospel offends man's pride. It tells him he is a sinner, that he is lost, helpless and

**If we must avoid offending, then we must stop preaching the cross.**

hopeless, that he cannot save himself, and that there is only one way of salvation. All this grates on his ears. A surgeon has to cut before he can remove the trouble; so does a faithful witness.

**The word "disciple" is not found in the epistles.**

The conclusion drawn from this is that the teachings on discipleship are not for us. Utterly wrong. Although the word itself is not found after the book of Acts, the teachings on discipleship are all there — just as strong as in the gospels.

**The life of faith is all right for a single person but not for a married man with children.**

My answer to that is "Your God is too small." Mine is as able to care for a family with nineteen children as He is for a bachelor.

**Those teachings, like the Sermon on the Mount, are for the kingdom.**

Of course they are. And we are in the kingdom. The kingdom exists now in mystery or in interim form. This is seen in the parables of Matthew 13. It is true that the King is not bodily present, but we acknowledge His rule, and we are His loyal subjects nonetheless.

**If all people lived like that (simply and sacrificially), who would support the work of the Lord?**

Dear friends, if all Christians lived like that, multitudes of sinners would be saved, the church would be revived, and the world would be evangelized in our generation.

Enough! Enough rationalizations! Enough excuses! May the Lord forgive us for so often explaining away the clear teachings of His Word. May we have a single, pure desire to stay as close to the Bible as possible and not try to tone down its radical demands.