



Spring 2026

The Gospel Gleaner

For the Lord, His Word, and His Church



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THE GOSPEL GLEANER

The first issue of the *Gospel Gleaner* was published in the spring of 1985. Much has changed in the world since then, but the mission and values of the *Gleaner* remain the same. Through the medium of electronic subscriptions, the *Gospel Gleaner* is more accessible than ever. Past issues can also be found on our website: www.gospelgleaner.com.

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Lessons from Elijah before Mount Carmel (2)

Andy Erwin

The worst times require the best men. In our last issue, we studied the first appearance of Elijah before King Ahab. We learned that the nation of Israel was given over completely to Baal worship. Elijah will spend three and one-half years between his appearances before King Ahab, and these years were just as important as his appearances (see 1 Kings 17:2-24). During this time, Elijah will be found acting in accordance with the word of the Lord, trusting in the power of the Lord, and preparing for the work of the Lord.

The same God who provided for Elijah is providing for us. The providence may not occur miraculously, but we should recognize it just the same. The providence may not come in the form of material wealth or physical health, but it is providence, nonetheless. Let us trust in His providence when facing trials (1 Corinthians 10:13), when seeking wisdom (James 1:5), and when hoping in grace for all spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3).

Even when the brook which had nourished Elijah dried to dust, it was an act of providence. Sometimes the brook dries up because it is time for us to act. See how Elijah was just as loved by God when the brook was deep and flowing as when it was dry. We can never become too satisfied with where we are in our present place, for God may have a work for us to do, or a greater plan in mind.

Upon leaving the brookside, Elijah could not go to his own people (cf. Luke 4:24-26). By serving the Lord faithfully, Elijah had become the troubler of Israel. The people believed the drought was Elijah's fault, rather than a punishment for their sins. Once more, providence came from an unexpected place.

The widow from Zarephath had but a morsel of bread and a little oil. But nothing is too small for God if

we are faithful with what we have. No matter how small our resources may be, we can still do something for God (consider the widow and her two mites). Paul said, "When I am weak, then I am strong." Man's extremity is God's opportunity.

Our duty to God should always outweigh our devotion to self. They were in the happy care of providence! God gave them no reserve, and thus no reason for presumption. God gave them just enough, so there was no reason for despair.

Lessons should also be learned from the death of the child. Children bring a certain and peculiar type of joy to one's life. For Elijah, I imagine this child was a constant source of joy. For the widow, I imagine this child was her only source of joy.

No circumstances ensure exemption from pain or loss. Her care for Elijah did not exempt her. Her love for her son did not exempt her. Yet even this tragedy can be seen as an act of providence. The woman was brought face to face with God. She was immediately reminded of some past sin, and her eyes were opened to her guilt and danger.

In this hour of perplexity, Elijah went straight to God. God heard his prayer, and the child was revived. Each new instance of deliverance was building his faith. God was preparing him for Mt. Carmel.

Conclusion

The course of Elijah's life presents four prominent ways in which God interacts with man: providence, intervention, retribution, and restitution. Mankind will find these interactions in his life today if he looks for them and acknowledges them. God's dealings are not for naught. He is ever preparing His people for greater service.

Replacement Theology

Johnny O. Trail

While listening to a nationally syndicated talk radio personality, I was exposed to the idea of “Replacement Theology.” The idea holds that one who states that the church is the manifestation of the kingdom and the Jews are no longer God’s chosen people is accused of teaching “Replacement Theology.” The talk radio personality opposes this as a doctrine that leads to antisemitism.¹ There are various invalid presumptions regarding replacement theology.

This has extremely close ties to a doctrine supported by many Protestant denominations in our society. This paradigm holds that the Old Testament Law is still in effect and that we are still obligated to observe its various teachings. While this treatise is in no way aimed at the mistreatment of any ethnic group in our world, any opposition to this position is being compared to antisemitic sentiments.

Consequently, part of the opposition stems from teachings associated with the premillennial doctrine, which is a patently false teaching. While premillennial doctrines vary, Wayne Jackson does a good job of stating the position in a succinct fashion when he says:

“To summarize, the premillennial view asserts that Christ came to this earth for the purpose of setting up his kingdom. He was, however, surprisingly rejected by the Jews. Hence, he postponed the kingdom plans and set up the church instead—as sort of an emergency measure. When he returns, he allegedly will raise only the righteous dead, restore national Israel, sit upon David’s literal throne in Jerusalem, and then reign for a span of one thousand

years—after which comes the resurrection of the wicked and the judgment.”²

First, the teaching that we are no longer living under the Old Testament law results in antisemitism is a non-sequitur logic. It is possible to deny the fact that we are living under the Old Testament economy and, at the same time, be totally against the mistreatment or abuse of Jewish people. Reasonable people understand this in response to people who practice immorality (i.e., disapproval of sin, but love expressed towards the sinful), and the logic does not fail regarding world religions that deny Jesus as the Messiah. While we do not agree with the denial of Christ as God’s Son, we would love people in various world religions and express concern over their denial.

Paul was a Jew who converted to Christ when he encountered the Messiah on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-18). There is no denying the deep love that Paul had for his countrymen, yet he knew they could not be saved under the Old Testament Law. Romans 10:1-4 says: “Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”

Those Jews attempting to continue under the Law of Moses have established their own form of righteousness and are outside of Christ.

¹ Eckstein, Yael (2025). “Christians and Jews Against Replacement Theology.” *International Fellowship of Christians and Jews*. Interview with Mark Levin, *The Mark Levin Show*. <https://www.ifcj.org/Christians-and-Jews-Against-Replacement-Theology-IFCJ>

² Jackson, Wayne (n.d.) “Examining Premillennialism,” *Christian Courier*. <https://christiancourier.com/Examining-Premillennialism-Christian-Courier>

No reasonable person could possibly accuse Paul of being antisemitic because of his stance regarding Christ, the Old Testament Law, and his love for the Jews. Notice his words in Romans 9:1-3: "I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh."

In essence, Paul was willing to be lost so his kinsmen, according to the flesh, might be saved. This is an expression of the highest love one can express for the soul of another.

Consequently, Christians cannot possibly agree with any world religion that denies the Messiahship of Jesus Christ, who is the Savior of the world. Matthew 10:32-33 says, "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven." One cannot deny Jesus before men and have his name confessed before the Father.

Moreover, salvation cannot be found outside of Jesus Christ. Acts 4:10-12 says, "Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the 'Stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

When various Jews denied the identity of Jesus as God's Son, they effectively nullified their chance at salvation. The same concept is as true today as it was when these words were spoken by Peter in Acts chapter four!

Those who teach "Replacement Theology" have been labeled as "Jezebel figures" who teach that "God changed His mind, and the church has replaced Israel in His covenant." This teaching has been labeled the "antithesis of what God said, and scripture said."³

God's mind was never changed, because He determined that the church/kingdom (cf. Matthew 16:18-19) would be established before the world was created. Scripture teaches that the church, or God's people, was contemplated before the world was created and prior to the time of Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. Ephesians 1:4 says, "Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love."

God had predetermined that the church would reveal the unsearchable riches found in the redemption offered through Jesus Christ. This was God's "eternal purpose" and not merely an afterthought by a God who was fooled by the Jews regarding their rejection of Jesus. Ephesians 3:8-11 says, "To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly *places*, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The suggestion made from the interview cited in this treatise was that one needs to "study the scriptures" to arrive at the Bible's teachings on the matter. Sadly, the conclusions reached when one truly examines the Bible are vastly different than those who want to argue for premillennial doctrines and the continuation of Moses' Law. Scripture teaches that the Old Testament law

³ Eckstein.

has been taken out of the way, and we are no longer obligated to obey it.

Notice what Paul says in Colossians 2:13-14. “And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”

Any cursory understanding of the American legal system underscores that fact. At one time, we lived under the rule of the English crown. That law was replaced under the Articles of Confederation. In time, the Articles of Confederation were replaced by the United States Constitution. No reasonable person would argue that U.S. citizens are still living under laws

prior to the establishment of the Constitution. By the same token, the Law of Moses has been replaced by the New Covenant, or the Law of Christ.

The church is, in fact, the chosen people of God under the New Covenant. Notice what the Apostle Peter says about the church in 1 Peter 2:9-10. “But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once *were* not a people but *are* now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.”

This is not antisemitic (especially coming from a Jewish man named Peter) but a statement of the truth—the church is God’s chosen people.

The Inspiration of the Bible

Jackson Erwin

“All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).

What do Christians mean when they describe the Bible as being “inspired?” Do we mean that the Bible is simply *inspirational* in its message? Do we mean that the biblical authors were “inspired” in the same way as other great writers such as William Shakespeare, Robert Frost, or C. S. Lewis?

Our understanding of inspiration will directly affect our trust in, reverence for, and submission to the Bible. For example, if we believe the Scriptures are inspired in *thought*, but not in *word*, then we might believe they are prone to certain historical or theological errors. If we believe that the Bible is inspired in the sense that

its authors were emotionally moved by the events of their day—making it a mere record of human experience—we might question the authority of Scripture.

False Views of Inspiration

For millennia, both Jews and Christians alike believed that the Bible was the literal word of God. However, with the rise of the Enlightenment in the 18th century, emphasis shifted to empirical evidence, reason, and freedom from tradition. While these aspects led to profound improvements in government and science, they also had a drastic effect on Christian theology. Specifically, biblical scholars motivated by the Enlightenment came to reject the miraculous elements of Scripture. They then passed on their views to the next generation of Bible professors, preachers, and Christians.

The Bible contains numerous miracles that cannot be proven or disproven by scientific means. Since miracles are *supernatural* (beyond the natural realm), Enlightenment scholars concluded that the traditional understanding of miracles was, at best, flawed. Therefore, they began to argue for a reinterpretation of the miraculous. Liberals who were more centrist in their views often spiritualized miracles—interpreting them as metaphors of a greater message—while the more radical came to describe the Bible as a book of myths, fables, and even lies.

Christians have generally believed that *the Bible itself is a miracle* since it claims to be written through the *miracle of inspiration*. Since the Enlightenment was strongly opposed to any belief in the miraculous, it was not long before its adherents would also redefine their understanding of inspiration.

Common Inspiration

This is the lowest view of inspiration, in which the biblical writers are believed to be inspired in the same way as other great writers, artists, or musicians. This understanding consequently robs the Scriptures of any authority or validity. The Bible becomes nothing more than a divine drama, a flawed history, or a glorified “self-help” book. Those who hold this view have more in common with the atheist than they do with the prophets, Jesus, or his apostles.

There are numerous problems with this view:

1. The Bible Is Authoritative.

The Scriptures do not speak of themselves as being merely the product of men.

2. The Bible Demands Obedience
3. The Bible Claims to Be More

The biblical authors never claimed to write from a merely human perspective. Rather, they attributed their message specifically to the God who spoke through them.

Thought Inspiration

Also known as “concept inspiration,” this theory argues that God provided the biblical writers with an overarching *thought, concept, or idea* to proclaim, but not the actual *words* to express it. This view allows the biblical writers to introduce contradictions, logical fallacies, or even misinterpretations of Scripture into their own works. That is to say, the Bible *contains* the word of God without *being* the word of God.

There is a major problem with this theory that should become obvious to most. The fundamental issue is that *we convey our thoughts with words, and we convey our words through thoughts*. In other words, this perspective tries to separate the inseparable. Words cannot take shape without thoughts, and thoughts cannot take shape without words.

We can see this reality throughout our everyday lives. When we think about our weekly schedule, *we think in words*. When we plan to have a difficult discussion with our bosses, spouses, or children, *we think about what we will say*. When we misspeak, we do so because we did not spend enough time in thought. However, if we truly understand what we believe or how we feel, we will be equipped to accurately convey our thoughts through words.

Partial Inspiration

The final flawed theory we will examine views the Scriptures as being *partly* the words of God and *partly* the words of men. For example, those who hold this view might believe that while Paul was divinely inspired when teaching about the nature of God, Christ, and sin, he sometimes went beyond God’s message by writing outdated, opinionated, and even sexist ideas.

To support this view, adherents often turn to Paul’s instructions concerning a Christian’s marriage to unbelievers (1 Cor. 7:10–14; emphasis added):

Now to the married **I command, yet not I but the Lord**: A wife is not to depart

from *her* husband. ¹¹ But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to *her* husband. And a husband is not to divorce *his* wife.

¹² But to the rest **I, not the Lord, say**: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. ¹³ And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. ¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. ¹⁵ But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such *cases*. But God has called us to peace. ¹⁶ For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save *your* husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save *your* wife?

Should we ascribe inspiration to the first command (vv. 10–11) but not to the second (vv. 12–16)? Was Paul moved by the Spirit of God at one moment of writing, but then moved by his own thoughts in the next? Could the Corinthians firmly adhere to his instructions about faithfulness in *Christian* marriage, but then disagree with his commands on *religiously mixed* marriages in the same breath? Those who adhere to this view would answer in the affirmative.

The Biblical View of Inspiration

The view most consistent with both the Bible and historic Christian teaching is that *the Scriptures are the perfect, inerrant, literal word of God*. This doctrine is often labeled “**verbal plenary inspiration**.” The word “verbal” shows that the inspiration of the Bible extends to its very *words*, and not to some generic thought or overall message.

The word “plenary” means “absolute” or “complete.” That is to say, *every word* recorded in Scripture

is of *completely divine origin* and is consequently *authoritative* and *true*. Since the Bible comes from the all-knowing God who can never lie (Titus 1:2; Num. 23:19; Job 37:16), it contains no contradictions, historical errors, or theological discrepancies.

This now leaves us with the final word in this doctrine: “inspiration.” The term appears only once in the Bible, being penned by the apostle Paul. “All Scripture is given by **inspiration** of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). In this verse, we see how the Bible is *verbally* inspired since the word “Scripture” means “writings,” and *writings* require *words*. We also see that the Bible is *completely* inspired, since Paul states, “**All** Scripture is given by inspiration.” However, what exactly is *inspiration* in the biblical sense?

The translation “inspiration” comes from the Greek term *theopneustos*. This word was likely coined by Paul himself, since it does not appear elsewhere in the New Testament or in any earlier Greek works. *Theopneustos* is composed of two common Greek words: *theos* (God) and *pneumos* (breath). Literally, the word means “God-breathed” (NIV) or “breathed out by God” (ESV).

In thought and word, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).



THE CONVERSION OF ANDREW JACKSON AND LONIA B. HARDEN & FAMILY

Raymond Elliott

A J. Harden was a farmer. He and his family lived in a rural area in the lower part of Dale County, Alabama, south of the small town of Newton. Mr. Harden had the habit of stopping his plowing or whatever kind of farm work he was doing each morning at a certain time so he could go to the house and listen to a radio program conducted by brother Rex A. Turner, Sr. from Montgomery.

Mr. Harden was not a highly educated man, but he could read, and read he did, especially his Bible. He studied the Word of God diligently and understood the teaching of our Lord and His apostles as found in the New Testament. The more he listened to the preaching of brother Turner, the more he studied his Bible. Mr. Harden was so impressed with brother Turner's teaching that he had a strong desire to meet him in person. Perhaps it was in the providence of God that he would soon have that opportunity.

It was about 1939 that the Bethel Baptist Church, where Mr. Harden served as a deacon, decided to hold a special meeting on a Saturday night. Because Mr. Harden had been actively engaged in providing transportation for their regular preacher, the men asked him to secure a preacher for the occasion. He quickly agreed to their request because he knew exactly who he wanted to come to the church and preach.

Mr. Harden wrote to brother Turner and explained his desire for Turner to come and preach at his congregation on a particular Saturday night. Brother Turner replied in a positive manner and informed Mr. Harden that he would bring a song leader with him. The song leader was brother Fitzhugh Ellington, a gospel preacher of renown in South Alabama. Mr. Harden did not inform his congregation that brother Turner was a member of the church of Christ

The church building was filled with members and visitors. Brother Turner requested that they not use the instrument while singing, and permission was granted to sing a cappella. Those in attendance remarked on the beauty of the singing as brother Ellington led the congregation in the selected songs.

In his opening remarks, brother Turner informed the congregation that he would only be preaching from the Bible and nothing more or less. When the sermon was finished and the invitation song was sung, twenty-six people responded. Later that night, they were immersed in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins in a creek some two miles from the church building. Among that number were Andrew Jackson and Lonia Harden and three adult sons by brother Harden's first wife, who had died. They were Floyd, Grady, and Johnny. The twenty-six new members of the body of Christ began attending the Christian Home church of Christ near Wicksburg, Alabama.

A.J. and Lonia Harden later had two sons, Clifford and Freddy. Floyd, the oldest son, would eventually serve as an elder at the Park Avenue church in Dothan, Alabama. The youngest son, Freddy, is presently serving as an elder at the Christian Home congregation. The decision made by A. J and Lonia Harden influenced their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren to obey the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The gospel of Christ is the power to save (Romans 1:16). Jesus Christ commissioned men to proclaim the good news that Jesus Christ died on Calvary so we could be saved by his atoning blood (Matthew 28:19, 20; Ephesians 1:7). Brother Rex A. Turner must have preached a 'powerful' sermon that Saturday night to move those twenty-six people to respond to heaven's invitation. It is interesting to note that brother Turner was born in 1913, so he was only twenty-six when he

preached at the Bethel Baptist Church in 1939! The Harden family has often expressed their love for brother Turner over the years because he came and preached the gospel on that Saturday night many years ago, which changed their lives forever.

[Personal note: I am thankful to my dear friends, Freddy and Sonja Harden, for relating to me the facts of this historic event that occurred some seventy-five years ago. RE]

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Interpretation Matters

Andy Erwin

The way one interprets the scriptures can be eternally significant. By using inadequate principles of interpretation, the scriptures can be twisted to one's destruction, cause one to fall from their steadfastness, and lead one away in the error of the wicked (2 Peter 3:16-17).

The most infamous example of the destruction caused by poor interpretation of the scriptures is the Jewish rejection of Christ. Jesus came unto His own, and His own did not receive Him. The Jews had been wrongfully taught that their Messiah would rule as a king and restore the kingdom of David to its former prominence, even surpassing it. Such expectations and the consequent rejection of Christ stem from flawed principles of biblical interpretation and from the message proclaimed among them before Christ's advent.

The Influence of the Rabbis

Three schools of interpretation developed in Judea, Alexandria, and the Essene community at Qumran, which produced the Dead Sea Scrolls. Each of these communities developed its own methods of interpretation (hermeneutics), none of which was good, true, or right, and as a result, each of these schools of thought led to a rejection of Christ.

In Judea, it was asserted that the words of the scribes were equal to the words of the Law and more beloved. It was claimed that the oral law they created was handed down by Mosaic succession through this chain of recipients. The Rabbis also claimed that the Law required the intervention of skilled interpreters, without which it could not be kept. It was believed that the rabbi's "voice" was God's.

Students of Catholicism will quickly see a connection to Catholic doctrine, as Catholics believe the

doctrines of the Church Fathers and the canonized saints of their tradition are as sacred as the word of God. They also teach the doctrine of apostolic succession, which asserts that the role of the apostles has been handed down through the bishops and popes of their church. Moreover, they teach that the Bible must be interpreted by the clergy and that, without the clergy, the scriptures cannot be correctly interpreted. Lastly, Catholics maintain that when the Pope speaks in his official capacity, he is the "vicar" or "voice" of Christ.

In Alexandria, Jewish scholars such as Philo (who believed himself to be inspired) attempted to blend the Hebrew Bible with Greek philosophy. The Old Testament was interpreted allegorically rather than literally and was believed to have a hidden meaning. The influence of Greek writing led to the creation of the apocryphal books, as the Jews sought something resembling that style to claim as their own. Thus, they created a literature of forgery and fiction, of fraudulent exaggeration and unreality. The scriptures became "in Jerusalem a series of untenable inferences, in Alexandria an airy dream" (F.W. Farrar, *The History of Interpretation*, p 71).

Human Wisdom and Philosophy

Paul taught us the danger of using Greek wisdom and philosophy to supplant the authority of scripture (see 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:16). A careful study of this passage will reveal:

- The preaching of the cross destroys worldly "wisdom."
- Such worldly "wisdom" leads to men not knowing or rejecting God.
- The gospel is true wisdom, wisdom from God, the only way to righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.
- Biblical faith stands in the preaching of the cross, the power of God, and not in the wisdom of men.

- The preaching of the cross is sufficient to be our only testimony, without addition, subtraction, or supplanting.
- Only the gospel through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit reveals the deep things of God.
- When one is spiritually discerned, holding the faith in sincere response to the gospel message, he is beyond the reproach of any proponents of carnal, worldly-minded philosophers.

Whatever Paul said concerning Greek philosophy would also apply to any philosophy originating with man. For example, from Germany came Hegel, who blended European and Greek Philosophy with scripture; Schleiermacher, who rejected the authority of scripture, the inspiration of the Bible, miracles, and even the resurrection; Baur and Strauss followed Schleiermacher; Wellhausen contrived the documentary hypothesis, rejecting Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch; and Bultman, who was set on demythologizing the Bible in order to find its hidden or “real” history. Once again, we find history repeating itself, or as Mark Twain would say, “rhyming.”

Mangled Sermons

Twisted scriptures led to mangled sermons. In the rabbinic schools of Hillel and Shammai, numberless disagreements led to the conclusion that opposing interpretations could equally be the word of God. As their disciples multiplied, who had not studied the word of God thoroughly, contentions increased, and the Law lost its unity and became two. Enter the Halakha, a set of rules intended to meet every conceivable case in which a legalist might be supposed to be in doubt. Enter the Haggadah, akin to modern homiletics, it was “a mass of fables, apologues, appeals, similitudes, proverbs, quant legends, moral applications, allegory, folklore, romance, and aphorism” (Farrar, pg. 55).

Jesus condemned the Halakha and warned of its danger (Matthew 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23). When compared to the scribes' preaching, the Haggadah, the people marveled at the difference and the authority with which He spoke (Matthew 7:28-29; Matthew 13:10-17). Jesus belonged to neither of the rabbinic schools, Hillel or Shammai, and was thus hated by both. With these systems of interpretation in place, it is no wonder the Jews rejected the Messiah and His kingdom.

New Hermeneutic and New Homiletic

The new hermeneutic of the twentieth century and the resulting new homiletic is nothing more than a verbal regurgitation of the doctrines of these rabbinic schools that rejected Christ. The basis for the new hermeneutic is that every interpretation is valid. With so many disagreements among Bible students, it would be unfair to present one opinion as the objective truth. Thus, the conclusions drawn from the scriptures are subject to the interpreter, and any notion of a final, objective, authoritative conclusion is dismissed as being narrow-minded or dogmatic.

The resulting preaching imposed by the new hermeneutic is labeled the new homiletic. Seeing that no final word can be said on the interpretation of a passage, the preacher must allow the hearer to draw his own conclusion from the text. The text means what you want it to mean. Once again, sermons are filled with “fables, apologues, appeals, similitudes, proverbs, quant legends, moral applications, allegory, folklore, romance, and aphorism” rather than the objective preaching of the gospel and appeals for men to obey God’s ultimate truth. Contrariwise, the apostles warned the church about such “fables” (1 Timothy 1:4; 4:7; 2 Timothy 4:4; Titus 1:14; 2 Peter 1:16) and insisted on preaching sound doctrine.

The church stands at a crossroad. We can continue in the sound, inductive principles of interpretation, and the preaching based thereupon, which brought about

a return to the old paths and restoration of New Testament Christianity, or we can abandon these principles and be led away with the error of the wicked.

Sound principles for interpreting the scriptures are not as complicated as one might surmise. In fact, these are based on logic and common sense. The logical/inductive method was carefully explained by D.R. Dungan many years ago (D.R. Dungan, *Hermeneutics*, pp. 78-95). It involves gathering all facts (cross-referencing other relevant scriptures and word studies), avoiding contradictions, and forming a conclusion. The method values context (direct statements), precedent (examples and actions), and proper inference when necessary.

A Case Study: Renovated Earth Theory

The inductive method will steer the Bible student clear of exegetical fallacies leading to twisted scriptures. Yet, increasingly, we seem to be encountering these fallacies among our brethren. One example of the abandonment of these principles is the resurgence of the doctrine of the renovated earth. In short, the doctrine asserts that the earth will not be destroyed but purged and renovated, and heaven will be here on a restored earth. While on the surface, this may appear to be a minor issue, considering some of the other issues we face. But a deeper dive into the theory will reveal many exegetical fallacies and the rejection of the inductive method of interpretation. Here is our concern. If we are allowed to dismiss these principles to maintain the renovated earth theory, on what other theory might we be allowed to discard them?

It is very often asserted that the Hebrew and Greek adjectives translated “new” in these passages (Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:2) are best rendered “renewed,” “restored,” or “refreshed.” However, the adjectives under consideration are used interchangeably throughout the New Testament. In the case of *kainos* and *neos*, the Greek adjectives in question, a false distinction has been created. In the

Old Testament, the Hebrew adjective is used 53 times. Only one occurrence suggests the possibility of a thing being “renewed,” but even then, it is inconclusive (see Lamentations 3:22-23).

It is believed that the heavens will be entirely new, while the earth will be renewed or renovated. You will note that this interpretation would allow *kainos* to mean “entirely new” when referring to the heavens, but “renewed” when referring to the earth – an arbitrary definition for the words.

In Revelation 21:1-2, we find the first heaven and the first earth passing away, just as Peter described in greater detail. We find that the new earth differs from the old earth, as there is no longer any sea. The new heavens are also different from the old heavens as they are without the sun and the moon (cf. 21:23). The sun and the moon, along with all the host of the heavens, passed away with a great noise (roar, NASB), and the elements were destroyed with intense heat. As Jesus said, Peter and John affirm, “...heaven and earth will pass away” (Matthew 24:35).

Clearly, it is not a picture of renovation of this earth, but of the disappearance of this earth and sky. Are we to believe that Christ’s regeneration is of “cosmic proportions,” and that the whole creation will share this deliverance and be freed from the corruption and mortality to which it has been subjected by the sin of man? If so, why does this not apply to the sun, moon, and sea? Why does the new earth require the renewing of the old, yet new heavens can include the annihilation of the old and creation of something that is altogether new?

When word studies are used to support this theory, they are always incomplete. For example, when Isaiah desired to use a verb conveying the idea of renewing, he did so. On two occasions (40:31 and 41:1), Isaiah used the verb *halaph*, which means to renew (NKJV; ESV). Isaiah also could have used the verb form of *hadash* (see 1 Samuel 11:14; Psalm 51:10;

Lamentations 5:21). Instead, Isaiah used verbs that convey the idea of creation ex nihilo (see Genesis 1:1; 2:3; Isaiah 40:26; 42:5). In 40:26 and 42:5, Isaiah obviously refers to creation from nothing. For 65:17 to mean renew, it would be contrary not only to the normal usage of the *hadash* in the Old Testament, but also to the normal usage of the verbs *bara* and *asah* in the Old Testament in general and in Isaiah in particular. The Lord, through Isaiah, is clearly using the language of creation to announce new heavens and a new earth. Do you find this information in the writings supporting the renewed earth theory? If not, why not?

The theory presumes the scriptures teach the future redemption of the universe, that Christ died to redeem the heavens and earth. Yet we cannot find one line of scripture to verify this claim. We find ample, clear scriptural evidence to prove that Christ died to redeem fallen man. Why can we not find one line of scripture to prove His death was also intended to redeem the physical universe if the theory is true?

Moreover, the presupposition of the theory must be introduced to the audience or reader before any exegesis of the text under consideration can begin. 2 Peter 3:10-13 provides a definitive statement that must not be treated lightly or re-translated to fit a preconceived notion.

Furthermore, the presupposition calls into question the divine reasoning behind the creation of the physical universe. It would have us believe that the world was created with the intention to last forever, that it was God’s intention all along to move His throne from heaven to earth.

Lastly, the case for this theory cannot be supported by what someone, somewhere, at some point in time, has said. It is inconceivable to imagine that a gospel preacher of a bygone era would want us to stop studying, limit our studies only to their writings, or discard the inductive method to maintain their theories. Moreover, it does not matter if every preacher in the

restoration movement believed and taught this doctrine. The only authority we have for our faith and practice is the word of God.

If we are allowed to commit these fallacies to maintain the renovated earth theory, on what other issue will we be allowed to commit them? The course of history has proven that interpretation matters.

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After Death Comes Judgment

John Olwanda

“And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment.” Hebrews 9:27

Death is something every person will face. No matter where we come from, how educated we are, or how religious we may be, the Bible tells us that death is certain. Just as certain as death is something else many people do not think about: judgment.

Hebrews 9:27 clearly teaches that every person will die once and that, after death, judgment will follow. There is no confusion in this verse. There is no second life, no return to earth, and no opportunity to change one’s destiny after death. What we do now determines what will happen then.

Death Is Sure for Everyone

The Bible describes life as short and fragile. “For you are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.” (James 4:14). Many people live as if life on earth will continue forever, but God’s word says it will not. Death is not an accident or a surprise to God. It is an appointment. Kings, prophets, apostles, and common people all died. Certainly, we will die too, unless the Lord returns first. Death is not the end of existence, but it is the end of opportunity.

What Happens After Death?

When a person dies, the body and the spirit separate. “Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12:7). The body returns to the earth, but the soul continues to exist. Jesus taught clearly that the soul lives beyond death. “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul” (Matthew 10:28).

After death, the soul is kept until the day of judgment. There is no teaching in Scripture that people can

pray their way out of judgment, be saved after death, or receive another chance. God has already spoken. Death closes the door to change.

Judgment Is Certain and Personal

The Bible teaches that every person will be judged by Jesus Christ, as it is written: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:10). No one will be left out. No one will hide behind family, church membership, or good intentions. Paul writes, “So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God” (Romans 14:12). On the judgment day, God will treat everyone fairly. God shows no favoritism. As it is recorded, “For there is no partiality with God” (Romans 2:11).

Jesus said that all who have died will be raised on the same day. “For an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come out” (John 5:28-29). There will be one resurrection, one judgment, and one eternal outcome.

Two Eternal Destinies

The Bible speaks clearly of two eternal destinies: eternal life and eternal punishment. “These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Matthew 25:46). There is no third place. There is no temporary judgment. Eternity will be forever. That is why preparation matters now.

Preparation Must Happen Now

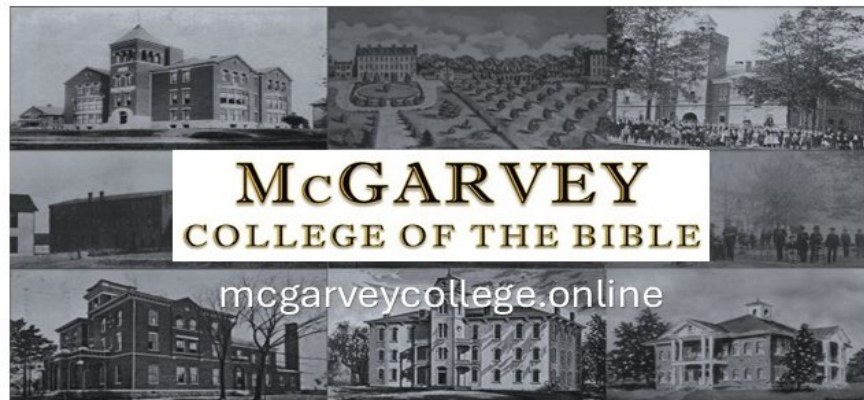
The Bible never teaches salvation after death. Salvation is offered in this life. “Behold, now is ‘the acceptable time,’ behold, now is ‘the day of salvation’” (2 Corinthians 6:2). God, in His love and mercy, has given a clear plan for salvation:

- Hear the gospel (Romans 10:17)

- Believe in Jesus Christ (John 8:24)
- Repent of sins (Acts 17:30)
- Confess Christ (Romans 10:9-10)
- Be baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38)
- Live faithfully until death (Revelation 2:10)

These are not human ideas; they are God’s instructions. One day, this life will end. Death will come. Judgment will follow. Therefore, “Prepare to meet your God” (Amos 4:12). No one can make this decision for you. No one can answer for you on the judgment day. After death comes judgment. Are you ready today?

John Olwanda is a student of McGarvey College of the Bible. His article was part of his assignments in our course on the last things. He preaches for the Umuri church of Christ in Kenya.



Our Philosophy for the Education of Preachers

Over the last seventy-five years, schools once dedicated to the higher education of ministers have become primarily research institutions. Not all schools, but many. And the temptation exists, or at least the notion, that a school, any school, should be so driven. In the US, the drive towards research-focused education started in the Ivy League seminaries, trickled down through denominational seminaries, and ultimately into the Bible departments of brotherhood schools.

Recognizing this trend and seeking to counteract it, schools of preaching were established by churches of Christ to focus on the practical application of the scriptures in preaching, ministry, and life. Schools of preaching have helped universities recognize the need to

maintain a practical emphasis in their ministerial training programs. We should be thankful for this.

Institutions working toward training ministers must realize that a preacher’s education is not *either* research or practical application. It must be *both*. Due to the proliferation of publishers, social media, and professors with advanced degrees from research-oriented institutions, preachers must be wary of the many wild ideas and strange takes propagated on the scriptures. They must know them and how to answer them. This requires research. Research requires discipline and a strong work ethic, both of which are admirable qualities, especially in a gospel preacher. Being able to write and debate when necessary is essential to reaching one’s full potential and perhaps to making “full proof” of one’s ministry.

McGarvey College of the Bible seeks to implement research while emphasizing practicality. We believe the message of the Bible reveals man's relationship with God and how that singular relationship affects all other relationships in life. We believe this is why the world is as it is. If man cannot love a supremely kind and loving Father in heaven, how can he ever love an unkind and unloving neighbor as himself? The world will never change unless its occupants change their relationship with God.

We seek to strengthen our relationship with God through our studies and to inspire our students to do the same through their teaching, preaching, and respective ministries. We emphasize researching and learning the great doctrines of scripture and teaching them in an understandable way so that the common man may hear our students gladly, while expecting to see the practical benefits of our program reflected in their ministries. However good a student may be in research, book reviews, and term papers, he will be of little value to the church until he can clearly communicate what he has learned and live by the principles of God's word.

Two things are needed to conduct this work: students and support. Concerning students, McGarvey College of the Bible now has students in the US, Kenya, Ghana, Malawi, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and India. We have just completed our first year of studies and already have more preachers enrolled in our graduate program than many of the schools among us that have existed for decades. We have enrolled 46 gospel preachers in the program. These preachers want to become more effective in their work. They are already preaching and seek to grow in their knowledge and abilities.

We expect many of them to progress to the point of training future preachers also.

As for support, our work is solely funded by donations from congregations and members of the churches of Christ. Without our brethren, this work would not be possible.

On a personal note, my admiration for our supporters continues to grow as we move forward. We have made no promises to name buildings in exchange for donations. We are an online school. What building could we name? And the contributions we receive are not funding athletic departments or social clubs. We don't have them. Our supporters give to one cause – the preaching of the gospel. They selflessly sacrifice to see that men whom they may never meet on earth are effectively taught and given the opportunity to grow in their knowledge of God's word so that they might become greater gospel preachers and more souls whom they may never meet on earth can be saved. Truly, the legacy of the Christian who valued souls above all else will remain forever.

Andy Erwin

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The banner for Reform & Restore Publishing features the title "Reform & Restore Publishing" in a large, serif font at the top. Below the title is a row of six book covers: "The Eldership" by J.W. McGarvey, "THE TEXT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT" by J.W. McGARVEY, "On Christian Unity" by David Lipscomb, "The Old Faith Restated" edited by J. H. Garrison, "The Union of Christians and The Death of Christ" by Walter Scott, and "The Spiritual Side of Our Plea" by A. B. Jones. To the right of the book covers is a circular logo with a red background, white text "R&R", and the tagline "Reform and Restore" below it. At the bottom of the banner, the text "Available on Amazon" is centered.

The Lost the Joy of Salvation

Psalms 51:12, 13

Introduction

1. Psalm 51:12, 13 are the words of a man who had broken at least four of the Ten Commandments. 2 Samuel 11:3, 4, 26, 27
2. There is joy that comes with salvation. Acts 8:39; 16:33, 34; Phil. 4:4; I Thes. 5:16; Gal. 5:22, 23.
3. Many like David have lost this joy. They want it restored.
4. Let us consider three things about the loss of this joy:

Discussion

I. **The Condition of Those Who Lose This Joy**

- A. They are unfruitful branches. Matt. 7:20; John 15:2
- B. They are unprepared fools. Matt. 25:1-3; 12, 13
- C. Their heart is not right with God. Acts 8:21
- D. They are in a perishing condition. Acts 8:20
- E. They have erred from the truth. James 5:19, 20
- F. They are sickening to the Lord. Rev. 3:15, 16
- G. Their condition is not promising. 2 Pet. 2:20-22

II. **The Cause for Losing This Joy**

- A. Life polluted by unconfessed sin. 1 Jn. 1:8-10; Heb. 3:12 (Heads don't turn gray, or hearts harden overnight!)
- B. No moral or spiritual stability. Lk. 8:13; Gal. 1:6; Eph. 4:14. (Little boy said he fell out of bed because he stayed too close to where he got in. Exactly why some members "fall away")
- C. Overly concerned with the cares of this life. Lk. 8:14; 12:13-21; Col. 3:5. (Idols are in our driveways, pockets, dens, etc.)
- D. Pleasures leave us spiritually barren. Lk. 8:14; Heb. 11:24-26; 2 Tim. 3:4. (If absence makes the heart grow fonder, how many must love the church!)
- E. Failure to receive the truth. Jas. 1:21; Jn. 8:32; 17:17; Matt. 13:14, 15 (Some like it until it gets too close to home.)

- F. Contributing to strife and discord in the church. Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 1:10-12. (False doctrine and preacher worship abound.)
- G. Indifference toward the work of the Lord. I Cor. 15:58; Rev. 3:14-19; Jn. 9:4; 4:31-39; Acts 2:42-47. (Lady said everybody cried at the response but me! I wasn't a member there!)

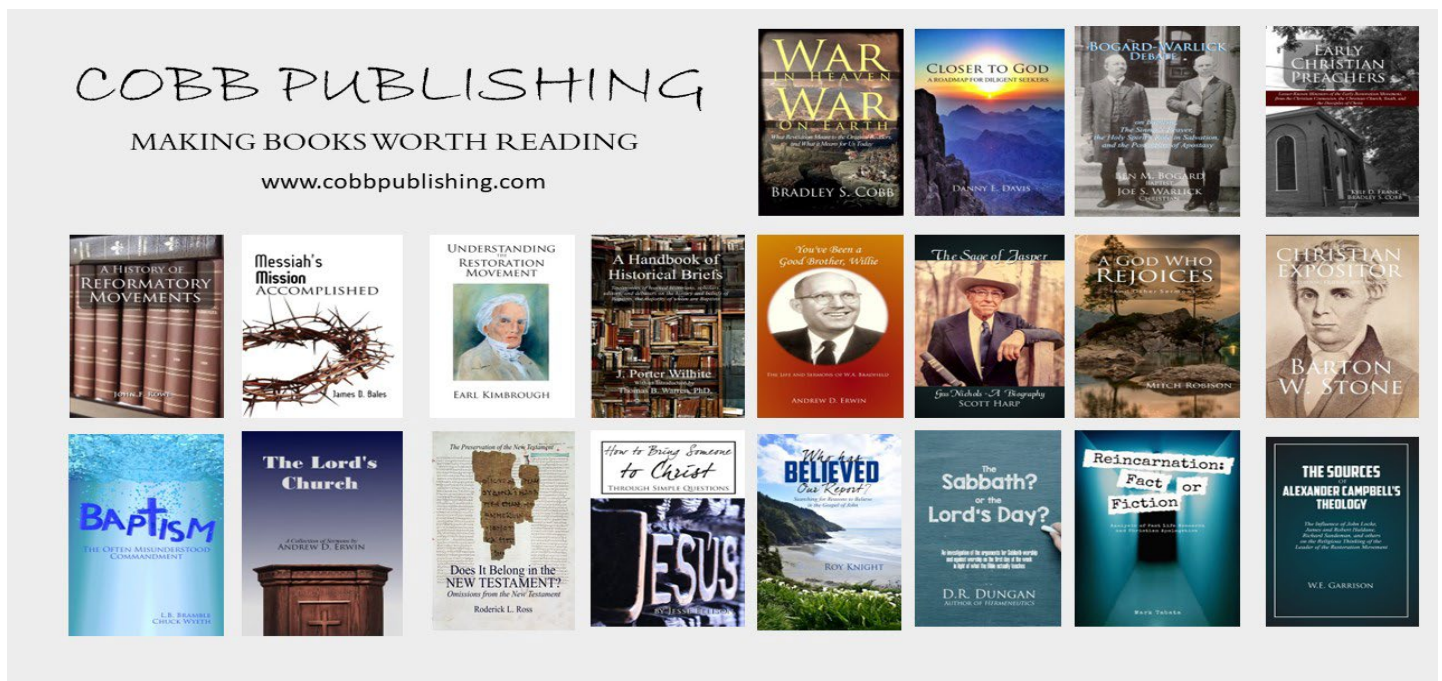
III. **The Cure for Those Who Have Lost This Joy**

- A. God has made provision for your restoration: (1) Warnings- 1 Thes. 5:14; (2) Those to pray for you- Jas. 5:17; and (3) Those to restore you. Gal. 6:1
- B. God has given a plan for your restoration. Repent- Acts 8:22; Rev. 2:5; Confess- Lk. 15:21; 1 Jn. 1:9; Pray- Acts 8:22; Jas. 5:16, 17
- C. God has made promises about your restoration. His anger will not fall upon the penitent- Jer. 3:22; the lost will be found- Lk. 15:24; and forgiveness will be enjoyed. 1 Jn. 1:9

Conclusion

1. What happens when the joy is found again! Soul-winning for Jesus takes place. Psa. 51:10-13.
2. Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658), Lord Protector of England, saw his government run out of silver for coinage. The cathedrals produced silver statues of the saints. He said, "We will melt the saints down and put them back into circulation." Do our hearts need to be melted down and put back into circulation?

-Mike Kiser



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