

EXPOSITORY FILES

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Jon. W. Quinn & Warren E. Berkley

Front Page

In the Days of Noah
(1 Peter 3:20,21)
By Jon W. Quinn

Speaking of God's judgment of the world during the time of the great flood, the Scriptures say, "...who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water. And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you-- not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience-- through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 3:20,21).

Several points ought to be noticed:

First, God is patient. The world was extremely corrupt in Noah's day, and yet God "kept waiting." But judgment did finally come. Likewise, God's patience today does not mean that the final judgment will never happen. He has spoken and said it is coming.

Second, Noah spent years preaching, calling upon the people to repent. After all that, only eight people ended up boarding the ark. Would you call that a success? The world doesn't, but I am sure that the world changed its mind when the flood began. Success belonged to the eight who obeyed God.

Finally, the Bible says in this very passage that “baptism saves us.” It explains that the power is not in the act itself, nor in the water, but in our trust being placed in God’s power as we are assured by the resurrection of Christ. It is appropriate to say “baptism now saves us” because that is what the Scriptures, the word of God, says.

The Calf of Gold
(Exodus 32)
By Jon W. Quinn

In Exodus 32 we find recorded an incident that holds many important lessons for us today. In fact, the New testament refers to the incident there with admonition not to allow similar things to deter us today from serving God faithfully. Consider the incident itself, and then we'll look at some points to be made from it.

Aaron And The Golden Calf
(Ex. 32)

Moses had delayed coming down from the mountain, at least in the peoples' view (Exodus 32:1). They had been led to Mount Sinai by Moses, and had witnessed powerful signs in Egypt and at the Red Sea. God was truly with them. But they could not see Him. They had seen abundant evidence of His power and might, but they could not see Him. Could the plagues in Egypt be explained naturally? Perhaps the splitting of the Sea to allow them safe passage was the result of tidal influences. Or maybe the gods of the Egyptians were angry with them and these things were their punishment. At least one could actually see the idols of the Egyptians, but not so with the God of Moses. Sure, He had also been the God of their ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. That had not kept them from becoming slaves.

For whatever foolish reasons, the people gathered together and asked Aaron to "make us gods." Now Aaron was much too cautious for that! He collected gold from the people and fashioned a calf (Exodus 32:2-4). Then Aaron built an altar to the calf and proclaimed a feast "to the Lord" (Exodus 32:5). The actual Hebrew word Aaron used for “Lord” was “Jehovah”. You see, Aaron thought it best to continue to serve Jehovah God Almighty, but

was willing to make a golden calf to represent Him because of the people's desire.

God informed Moses that the people were sinning. Moses interceded for them, pleading for God's mercy, even stating his own willingness to die with them (vss. 7-14). Then, Moses returned, broke the tablets of stone containing the law, and destroyed the calf (vss. 15-20). After this, Moses confronted Aaron. Aaron tried to put the blame on the people (Exodus 32:21-24). In the following mayhem, 3000 were slain (vs. 28).

Note Moses' later recollection of this event: "I took hold of the two tablets and threw them from my hands and smashed them before your eyes. I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all your sin which you had committed in doing what was evil in the sight of the LORD to provoke Him to anger. For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which the LORD was wrathful against you in order to destroy you, but the LORD listened to me that time also. The LORD was angry enough with Aaron to destroy him; so I also prayed for Aaron at the same time. I took your sinful thing, the calf which you had made, and burned it with fire and crushed it, grinding it very small until it was as fine as dust; and I threw its dust into the brook that came down from the mountain." (Deuteronomy 9:17-21).

Beware Leaders Who Forget God

Leaders of God's people can succumb to temptation. Only faith in God is a sure thing. Our fellow human beings will sometimes fall short, even the best of us.

There are many religious leaders in America leading in all kinds of different directions. In Aaron's day, there was one right response to what the people had requested. It was not to make gods for them to worship. It was not even to make one idol of God and say it represented Jehovah. It was to teach the will of God concerning the matter. It was to teach God's will even if people did not like it or refused to listen. It was to teach God's commandments even if that meant becoming unpopular. It was to teach God's truth even at risk of harm or death. It is the same way today. "solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke,

exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” (2 Timothy 4:1-5).

Paul wrote, “But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.” and then refers to God as “ and then speaks of God as “...King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever.” (1 Timothy: 1:5;17) We simply cannot picture God, and to try to visually represent Him by things of this world is insulting to His eternal glory.

So, honor men and women of righteousness for their faith, love and courage, but let your first love and loyalty be to the Lord, and if a good person goes bad, don't follow them; don't let it hurt your faith.

God Demands Obedience

That is true today as well. We have no business calling Jesus “Lord” if we will not obey Him (Luke 6:46). Remember that confession you made at the beginning of your discipleship: “I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

God is the Creator of the universe. He is Almighty and we must not be so arrogant as His creatures to dismiss His commandments as unimportant. Most of the world seem to have such a casual attitude toward God's commandments. So many think the Lord may be disobeyed without consequence. How sad. There is not an iota of Biblical evidence that one may live out his or her life minimizing the commandments of God and “going with the flow” of society and still be rewarded with heaven one day (2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 John 3:2-3; 5:3-4; Revelation 22:14-15).

Idolatry Today

Idolatry can be a problem for God's people today. Craving evil things is a form of idolatry. In fact, Paul tells us to learn from the sad example of what Aaron and the people did (1 Corinthians 10:6-7;11). We learn that making money and things more important in our lives than walking with

God is idolatry (Colossians 3:3-7). So, as John puts it, there is still the need to beware of idolatry: "Little children, guard yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21).

One final point; We recall how Moses plead unto God not to destroy the people for their sin. We also have one who makes intercession for us today. As good as Moses was, we have an even better intercessor. It is our Lord and King; High Priest and Savior; Jesus (Hebrews 7:22-25).

The Whole Armor of God
(Ephesians 6:10-18)
By Fred Shewmaker

"Finally, my brethren be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having gird your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints--"

Beginning in Ephesians 5:21 and leading up to these verses there is a discussion of "submitting" and the relationships which exist between certain ones: "Wives submit to your own husbands" (5:22) and the relationship which should exist between a husband and wife (5:23 - 33). Chapter 6 verses 1 - 4 show that children are to submit to their parents and the relationship which should exist between children and parents is considered. Verses 5 - 9 show that bondservants (slaves) are to submit to their masters and the relationship which should exist between slaves and their masters

Verse 10 begins with the word "Finally." This word carries the idea that a conclusion to what has previously been written will be drawn. "Finally, my brethren," refers to "the saints ... and faithful in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 1:1). This conclusion is not only to the discussion of submission and relationships, but to the letter itself.

Let us now give consideration to the conclusion: "my brethren, Be strong in the Lord." Being strong requires more than entering the body of Christ. In Christ one must grow (Eph. 4:15). 1 Peter 2:2 "As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that that you may grow thereby," "...Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." By the pure milk of the word one acquires knowledge to grow in favor with God and to "be strong in the Lord."

"Be strong in ... the power of His might." 2 Peter 1:3 "...His divine power has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue." Romans 1:16 "...I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes." The source of our strength "in the Lord" is His power - the gospel. We need strength to wrestle. Wrestle conveys the idea of "a contest between two in which each endeavors to throw the other, ... hold him down with his hand upon his neck;" (Thayer, p. 474). In our spiritual lives we are in that kind of contest with: Principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age and spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

As brethren, we are under orders to: **"put on the whole armor of God"** (Eph. 6:11). Armor is for defense - any clothing or covering worn to protect one's person in battle. We are to wear the girdle of truth, breastplate of righteousness, shod with the gospel of peace, the shield of faith and helmet of salvation in order to be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

"Wiles" conveys the idea of trickery and deception. Such things cannot penetrate the girdle of truth. This is why it is very important to pay close attention to the details of every passage of Scripture. Being unaware of the significance of some detail or truth may leave one vulnerable to the devil's trickery or deception. Putting on the breastplate of righteousness helps one to withstand the devil's tricks and deceptions. By maintaining righteousness one is acceptable to God. In Acts 10:35 the apostle Peter said, "...In every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by him."

Failure to maintain righteousness is sin. 1 John 5:17 tells us, "All unrighteousness is sin,...." In Isaiah 59:2 the prophet wrote, "...Your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you." To be righteous one must obtain forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38) in order to be reconciled unto God (2 Cor. 5:20 & 21). Righteousness is maintained by overcoming temptation. We are instructed in James 1:13 - 15 "Let no man say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15 then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death." If one allows the trickery or deception of the devil to penetrate his righteousness, his life in Christ will be destroyed.

In order to stand one who wrestles against principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age and spiritual hosts of wickedness; needs to be properly shod with the gospel of peace. That may sound strange. However, this does not refer to peace with: The evil forces against which we wrestle. Romans 12:18 "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men." (wrestling against principalities is not wrestling men). The gospel is good news or glad tidings. We are to stand shod with the glad tidings of peace. This peace is peace with God. Romans 5:1 "...Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ." As soldiers of Christ standing in peace with God, we can conquer every foe. "Stand" (v. 11), "Having done all, to stand" (v. 13), "Stand" (v. 14).

"Above all, taking the shield of faith." Contrary to a popular idea, "above" does not convey the idea of most important of all. The Greek word translated "above" is defined as meaning "in addition to; over above" (Thayer, p. 233). Every piece of the armor of God is important. We cannot over stress our need to "put on" each piece. "The shield of faith " can "quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one." Faith can protect you when you are not immediately able to answer a question, refute a claim or expose an assertion. At such times the best response may be: "I do not believe it." Let what you do believe - your shield of faith - quench the fire of questions, claims and assertions which the "wicked one" will use to try to conquer you.

"And take the helmet of salvation." The helmet represents a Christian's assurance of mind regarding his salvation. 1 Thessalonians 5:8 Paul designates it "a helmet the hope of salvation." Verse 9 Paul writes, "For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord

Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him." Hope and assurance go together, Hebrews 6:11 & 12 "...we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Those in Christ stand in full assurance of salvation. Ephesians 1:3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." Salvation is one of those "spiritual blessings." 2 Timothy 2:10 "...I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."

What a wonderful God we have. He provides us with the perfect armor: To withstand the wicked one. To wrestle against principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age and spiritual hosts of wickedness.

Our wonderful God also provides our armament - spiritual weapons. 2 Corinthians 10:4 - 6 "...The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strong holds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, 6 and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled." Ephesians 6:17 "...Take ... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

"The Spirit" is not the word of God. The word of God is the Spirit's sword. We are to take it and: Pull down strongholds. Cast down arguments. Cast down every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. Bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And be ready to punish all disobedience.

Ephesians 6:18 "praying always with all prayer and supplication." Without the constant help of God we could not withstand the wicked one. By prayer: We express our hope of salvation and our faith. We acknowledge the gospel of peace. We maintain our breastplate of righteousness. In 1 John 1:9 we are promised, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." By prayer and supplication we comply with the requirement of truth in 1 Thessalonians 5:16 "pray without ceasing."

Only "brethren ... in the Lord" are instructed to "put on the whole armor of God." If you are NOT in the Lord: You cannot gain the victory over the wicked one. You have no protection against the devil. You will be unable to stand in the evil day. You have no armor to protect you against the trickery and deception of the devil. You have no weapons with which to conquer the wicked one. You have no spiritual blessing because Ephesians 1:3 tells us all Spiritual blessings are in Christ.

If you are not in Christ, Why? Jesus said it is wise to hear and do what He says (Mt. 7:24). Matthew 11:28 He said, "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." John 14:1 He said, "You believe in God, believe also in Me." Luke 13:3 He said, "...Unless you repent you will ... perish." Matthew 10:32 He said, "...Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven." And in Mark 16:16 He also said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved;..." When you have done these things, "put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

The Wiles of The Devil

Warren E. Berkley

"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil," (Eph. 6:11).

Our English word "wiles" is generally used to express ***deception through trickery*** and includes all the methods that would be part of that. It has to do with cunning or skill applied to no good purpose. The word *ruse* is a synonym with stress on the creation of a false impression.

But when definitions seem inadequate, what helps is personification; a living example of the thing under consideration. The Bible teaches, the devil – as he works his craft against us – personifies ***wiles***. He is the master of wiles.

He lies to us, wants to trap us, discourage us and snare us. He will do anything he can do with cunning satanic variety to weaken us and destroy us. He goes to work daily to produce discouragement, confusion, indifference and imbalance. He is our chief enemy, but deals in wiles and stratagems. So here is a "briefing" (to borrow military intelligence terminology). ***Four things to watch for:***

1. The devil exaggerates the pleasures of sin while minimizing the true nature and outcome of sin. Of Moses the Holy Spirit said: He “refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,” (Heb. 11:24,25). Observe that phrase: “enjoy the passing pleasures of sin.” The devil approaches us with exaggerated emphasis on the pleasure we can enjoy if we will sin. He is asking us to invest in something with promise of immediate return – but without telling us about the risk, the outcome, the ugly side! The devil is counting on the fact we will see the fun, the pleasure – the joy of satisfied appetite – and jump at that, acting impulsively. If you stop and think; if you inquire; if you look deeply and consider consequences – you frustrate the wiles of the devil. The devil wants us to act on the immediate pleasure of the tempted behavior.

Therefore, Satan is annoyed when we stop to think; when we inquire about some tempted behavior; when we think in terms of long-term consequences - - when we study and pray and consider if something is right or not! Satan exaggerates the immediate gratification, while minimizing the true nature of the sin. The bait looks good, but when you take that bite you have taken in the ugly poison of sin.

2. The devil sees an opening into our lives through emotions or mood (Eph. 4:26). People have said to me: *I knew I shouldn't be drinking, but I was depressed. I know I'm married, but this other woman made me feel so good. Sure it's wrong to lie, but I was under such pressure! It was a sin to treat my brethren the way I did, but I was so mad!*

What’s happening? The devil is watching. When we fall into certain moods or we are overcome by various kinds of emotions, **the enemy steps in to defeat us; to lead us into sin.** The wiles of the devil include this cunning ability to find openings through our moods and emotions. Paul said, “ ‘Be angry, and do not sin:’ do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil (Eph. 4:26).” When I’m angry and I take that anger with me into the next day, and carry it along with me for weeks and months and years ... I might as well wear a bull’s eye target. The devil will find me and seek and entrance into my heart for his evil purpose and to my downfall. Use the Word of God and prayer – to take a careful inventory of your moods; your emotions; the grudges you carry. Expel the hurt feelings you can’t seem to turn loose of; the habitual, destructive thoughts you entertain.

The devil can use those things to slowly erode your character; to lead you into sin to gradually turn you away from God.

3. The devil will use people to lead us astray. Not long into His public work our Lord warned men of men. He told people to be careful about people! He knew the devil can use people to lead us astray. So Jesus said, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves,” (Matt. 7:15). When He sent His disciples out He said, “Beware of men,” (Matt. 10:17). Jesus wanted us to know this: the devil can use people to lead us astray. Through words of invitation into sin; through false teaching, or through subtle influence he can defeat us. One of the wiles of the devil is to use people to corrupt us.

Read 1 Tim. 6:1-5. In a situation where there are teachers not consenting to wholesome words, the devil discovers his advantage. When men who preach and teach do not maintain loyalty to “the doctrine which is according to godliness,” the devil can step in through that entrance and seduce many. When we accept, endorse, consort with false teachers, that indifference plays right into the hands of error and the devil’s purpose. Let’s observe: Paul describes the risk to Timothy then he tells Timothy: ***“From such withdraw yourself.”*** Too much is at risk to play around with men like this. It is one thing to be patient and kind and do what we can to work with people. But when corruption is evident; when men are at work who are destitute of the truth, we cannot just let error have its’ way. “From such withdraw yourself.” Paul warned the Colossians – “I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument,” (Col. 2:4).

4. The devil is the master marketing agent; he packages sin in neat, attractive bundles (Heb. 3:12,13). What if someone came to you with a garbage bag; trying to hand to you a garbage bag. As soon as they hold it out you can smell the contents. You can hear the buzz of maggots. You can see the leaking liquid. Are you going to take the hand-off?

But what if someone comes to you, neatly dressed with a pleasant smile. And they hand to you a beautiful package, like it was professionally wrapped at Dillard’s. It has matching bow and ribbon; perfectly wrapped and absolutely beautiful. Your reaction would not be the same – as with the garbage bag!!

The devil is the master market executive. He knows how to package sin so that it doesn't look like anything bad. This is part of his deceptive essence. For instance – in the lust of the eyes – the devil seeks to present sin to us IN A NEAT PRETTY PACKAGE so that our first reaction is to look; to admire; to want; to take.

How can we stand against such a wily enemy?

¹⁰*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.*

¹¹*Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.* ¹²*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

¹³*Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*

¹⁴*Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,* ¹⁵*and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;* ¹⁶*above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.*

¹⁷*And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;* ¹⁸*praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints,” (Eph. 6:10-18)*

When The End Comes

[Jer. 14:11-16]

Steven C. Harper

Someone once said, "All good things must come to an end." That is true, but the fact is, all things must come to an end on this earth — good or bad. As far as mankind, it has been revealed in God's word, “*it is appointed for men to die once*” (**Heb. 9:27**). And for the creation itself, God's word tells us, “*the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up*” (**2 Pet. 3:10**). Nothing on this earth will survive in its current state, for even our lowly body will be transformed on the day of Christ's return. As Paul said: “*the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed*” (**1 Cor. 15:52**).

But some now deny the reality of an end such as God's word describes! Some deny there will ever be an end — of *any* kind! Some who begin with a denial of God suppose that this world on which we live and the universe in which it exists will continue forever or, at worst, continually degrade for billions and billions of years until some supernova or other catastrophic universal event will change things. To many, though, no thought is given to their end or, if any consideration of the end is given at all, it is short and shallow and pushed aside for the consideration of the 'here and now' more often than not. Most people would rather think about only today and not think about their future and what is to inevitably come. It's as if the vast majority thinks, "If I don't talk about it, it isn't real." But **denying** reality does not **change** reality! Try denying the reality of gravity and then jump off of a 10-story building; you might deny it for about 95 feet, but you will come face to face with reality soon afterwards.

Instead of denying reality [the eventual end of all things], let's consider **Jeremiah 14:11-16** and how it describes a time when God's people denied reality up until the very end, and let us learn the lessons they did not learn — and for which they paid dearly. And let's boil it down to one, simple question: When the end comes, will you be prepared? We need to know some things right now — before that day comes, because when the end comes:

It Will Be Too Late. (vv. 11, 12) In the context, Israel was the one being chastised by God, even as they neared the punishment He had promised [captivity]. Though God had warned them time and time again, the people continued in their evil ways and followed after the gods of the surrounding nations. Sadly, because they had rejected Him and His warnings so many times (cf. **2 Chron. 36:15, 16**), it was too late for anyone to now intervene on their behalf. What a sad statement! To whom would they go now that it was too late to seek God's help and favor — the surrounding nations? They would be of no help. The fact was, their end was sealed.

When this was written, it was too late for these people to do anything about their punishment; it was certain that they were going to captivity. Our eternal destination is not yet certain, so let us heed the words spoken by God to His people *before that day*: "*Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near*" (**Isa. 55:6**). They had had opportunities to seek the Lord before that day, but they passed by those opportunities; don't let that be us! Let us heed the words of the apostle Paul: "*Behold, now is the*

accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2). When the end comes, it will be too late to seek God; NOW is the time!

God also said He would not hear their cry when they fasted (v. 12). The implication of the fasting was that the people now had penitent hearts. But, alas, God said it was too late! The lesson we must certainly learn from this is that the time of repentance is NOW, for when the end comes, it will be too late to suddenly feel sorry for having transgressed the will of God! **Then**, we will be judged for the deeds done in the body (2 Cor. 5:10), not for the utter terror and remorse we will feel in our hearts as we then stand before the God we once denied. Right **now** is the time for repentance, for as the psalmist said, “*The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit*” (Psa. 34:18). Blessed is the one who **now** realizes his spiritual destitution and who mourns his pitiful condition (Matt. 5:3, 4). **Then** it will be too late to repent; NOW is the time!

God also said that He would not accept their offerings (v. 12). Now, think about that; here is something that God had **commanded**, yet now He said He would no longer accept it from them — especially at this point. These people had a long history of failing to offer the required sacrifices, offering the required sacrifices without any real meaning, and dishonoring God by what they **did** give. The audacity of the people was demonstrated in that they went so far as to offer their children as sacrifices to their idols and **on the same day** come to the house of God to give the pretense of worship and faithfulness (Ezek. 23:37-39). Is it any wonder God would refuse their sacrifices — especially now that it was done only as a last resort?

Surely we can see the lesson for us in this passage: worship Him NOW and worship Him as **He** has instructed us. Many today refuse to worship the Lord, or refuse to worship Him as He prescribed, but I am confident that all will willingly acknowledge Him as Lord when the end comes — but it will then be too late! Let us **now** acknowledge Him as Lord in humble submission by obeying His words; then — and only then — can we call Him our Savior (Heb. 5:9). Rejecting Christ as the means of our salvation is just as repulsive in the sight of God as those of old who offered sacrifices with wicked intent. Let us not forget the words of the writer of Hebrews, who warned of the terrifying surety of punishment for those who have “*trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace*” (Heb. 10:29). The sacrifice **we** must offer is self (Rom. 12:1) and it must be done

NOW! When the end comes, it will be too late to try to offer something to God in service and worship. NOW is the time!

Some Deny The Reality of the End. (vv. 13, 14) All the time God's real prophets warned of the pending end and concurrent punishment, the people of God protested, the prophets denied it, and the priests disparaged any idea that God would actually punish them. But, again, denial is not reality! The psalmist tells us, "*The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God'*" (**Psa. 14:1**), but does his denial mean God really doesn't exist? Of course not! To the fool, God does not exist simply because he says so, and that is why he is a fool! The fact is, those who deny God's existence do so because they do not want to accept the consequences: a necessary implication that obedience to His will is expected! On the day, when all stand before the judgment throne, none will then deny Him, but then it will be too late! Though God did not leave Himself without witness (**Acts 14:17**), some will deny He exists, and certainly deny any claim He makes to have all authority over us. Many men will deny the obvious, proclaiming themselves wise ["Are you dumb enough to believe in God?"] and beyond such "simple-mindedness," yet His attributes are clearly seen! The problem is not in the clarity, but in the willingness to see! Again, the root cause of this denial is that they might do what they want to do and have a clear conscience to engage in what are truly called Godless acts.

Some deny the fact of the end because they ultimately seek to deny what comes with the end: judgment. God's own people were not immune from the false idea that God would not punish, but fell prey to the deceptive words of false prophets, who told them, "*Is not the LORD among us? No harm can come upon us*" (**Mic. 3:11**). They had gotten so used to the longsuffering and mercy of God that they came to believe, "*The LORD will not do good, nor will He do evil*" (**Zeph. 1:12**). But to those false prophets who said, "*It is not He. Neither will evil come upon us, nor shall we see sword or famine,*" God promised, "*Thus shall it be done to them*" (**Jer. 5:12, 13**). When the end came for them, those denials must have seemed very foolish!

Today, I must sadly report that some of our own brethren are working hard at denying the reality of an end that includes punishment. It was not so long ago that we rightly chastised and ridiculed those who taught the idea of the so-called "Jehovah's Witnesses," in saying God would not punish the wicked for an eternity. But now we have men such as Ed Fudge, the late Homer Hailey, and F. LaGard Smith proclaiming this doctrine! [I will gladly

furnish quotes from their writings to those who ask.] Oh, how far we have fallen! It seems we now have men who have followed the path of the false prophets and worthless priests of Israel's day, proclaiming, "Peace! Peace!" When there is no peace. Friends and brethren, do not be fooled; when our Lord spoke of the coming punishment of the wicked (**Matt. 25:46; John 5:28, 29**), He was not deceived or mistaken!

In The End, God's Word Proven True. (vv. 15, 16) In the context of this rebuke, God plainly tells us that the false prophets who said, "*Sword and famine shall not be in this land*" — *'By sword and famine those prophets shall be consumed!'* What they had spoken was "*a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart*" (**v. 14**), and for that they would be punished! Though the people, the priests, and the prophets all denied the coming end, it came — just as God said it would! Like all the times before when warnings were given and punishment was promised, God's word was proven true by its fulfillment.

The apostle Peter warned against the false prophets who would come (**2 Pet. 2:1-3; 4-10**), and "*exploit you with deceptive words*" (**v. 2**) and who would "*bring on themselves swift destruction*" (**v. 1**). Peter comforted the minds of the faithful in reminding them that God had not in times past overlooked the evil deeds of men and even angels, and with that confidence, reminded the faithful that the Lord knew how to "*reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment*" (**v. 9**). Just as with the false prophets of old, God will punish the deceivers for their deception! Though they deny it, their punishment will come and *theirs* is most certain! Whenever we hear men today proclaiming the love of God would not allow a man to suffer punishment [and certainly not an *eternal* punishment], you can be sure that he will likely be on the receiving end of the very thing he denies will come, just as the false prophets of old.

The sad part of this rebuke is that God had to deal not only with the deceivers, but also with the deceived (**v. 16**). It is sad because the deceived receive no less a rebuke for having believed [willingly] the deception of the false prophets! The false prophets spoke deception, but they merely spoke what the people wanted to hear! For their willingness to hear deceptive words, the deceived would also be punished! Let us heed this warning every so seriously, for there are many deceivers gone out into the world who proclaim to be speakers of truth. Do not let us think that we are beyond the same fate, for if deceivers exist, there will be those who are deceived. Don't

let it be us! The very possibility is found in the words of the apostle Paul, who warned, "*Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit*" and, "*Let no one cheat you of your reward*" (**Col. 2:8, 18**). If we are ignorant of truth, how can we know whether or not we are being deceived? It will be a sad day when we stand before God, having been led astray but believing we followed truth!

This sad occasion in the history of God's people is given for us an admonition to follow after the true path of righteousness and not be led away by the deceivers who promise peace and comfort when, in reality, we face the wrath of God. When we have men preaching salvation by mere confession of Jesus as the Christ, we are in danger of this certain punishment, for that is not the whole counsel of God! Yes, we must confess Jesus as the Christ, but we must also repent of our sins and turn to God (**Acts 26:20**). We must also be baptized into Christ for the remission of our sins and live faithfully until our last day (**Acts 2:38; Heb. 10:34-39**). What have you done? Will **you** be ready when the end comes?

Topic Page
Baptism: A Pre-Christian History
By Ed Barnes

WHEN JOHN THE BAPTIST came to the deserts of Judea "preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" he was met with great success. Matthew 3:5 says, "People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River." Luke adds that crowds were coming out to be baptized by him. And, "When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too." (Luke 3:7, 21).

The Jewish people to whom John's ministry was directed were familiar with the concepts of repentance and forgiveness of sins (1 Kings 8:33-34; Isa 55:6, 7) even though complete forgiveness was not possible apart from the shed blood of Christ (Heb 9:15). But what about baptism? What familiarity did the Jews of the first century have with the practice of baptism?

The New Testament clearly points out that the baptism of John was from God. It came from heaven (Matt 21:25). It was administered for the spiritual

purpose of proclaiming repentance and receiving forgiveness of sins (Mark 1:4). But the act of baptism itself has a history beyond the Scriptures.

The Greek World

"The Greek word "baptizo" as used in Mark 1:4 ("And so John came, baptizing in the desert region . . .") was very common among Greek-speaking people; it is used in every period of Greek literature and was applied to a great variety of matters, including the most familiar acts of everyday life. Greek speakers and hearers understood the word at the time John was preaching; it had no doubtful meaning. It meant what we express by the Latin word 'immerse' and kindred terms; no one could then have thought of attributing to it a different meaning, such as 'sprinkle' or 'pour.'" (Boles, H. Leo Commentary on Matthew. Gospel Advocate Pub. Pg 74).

The Encyclopedia of Religion (McMillan. 1987. Pg. 59) continues by pointing out that the word baptism means to plunge, to immerse, or to wash; it also signifies, from the Homeric period onward, any rite of immersion in water. The baptismal rite is similar to many other ablution (the washing of one's body or part of it as a religious rite) rituals found in a number of religions..."

Pre-Christian Religions

The practice of baptism in pagan religions seems to have been based on a belief in the purifying properties of water. In ancient Babylon, according to the Tablets of Maklu, water was important as a spiritual cleansing agent in the cult of Enke, lord of Eridu. In Egypt, the Book of Going Forth by Day contains a treatise on the baptism of newborn children, which is performed to purify them of blemishes acquired in the womb. Water, especially the Nile's cold water, which was believed to have regenerative powers, is used to baptize the dead in a ritual based on the Osiris myth. Egyptian cults also developed the idea of regeneration through water. The bath preceding initiation into the cult of Isis seems to have been more than a simple ritual purification; it was probably intended to represent symbolically the initiate's death to the life of this world by recalling Osiris' drowning in the Nile.

In the cult of Cybele, a baptism of blood was practiced in the rite of the Taurobolium: where one was covered with the blood of a bull. At first this rite seems to have been to provide the initiate with greater physical vitality, but later it acquired more of a spiritual importance. A well-known inscription

attests that he who has received baptism of blood has received a new birth in eternity. However, the fact that this baptism was repeated periodically shows that the idea of complete spiritual regeneration was not associated with it.

The property of immortality was also associated with baptism in the ancient Greek world. A bath in the sanctuary of Trophonion procured for the initiate a blessed immortality even while in this world. The mystery religions of that period often included ablution rites of either immersion or a washing of the body for the purposes of purification or initiation. Other concepts said to have been associated with these forms of cultic baptisms included the transformation of one's life, the removal of sins, symbolic representation, the attainment of greater physical vitality, a new beginning, spiritual regeneration. It is believed that all ancient religions recognized some form of spiritual cleansing, renewal or initiation that was accomplished through a washing or immersion in water.

Judaism

The liturgical use of water was common in the Jewish world. The Law of Moses required ablutions (washings) on the part of priests following certain sacrifices and on certain individuals who were unclean because of an infectious disease (Num. 19:1-22; Lev 14,15, 16:24-28). The natural method of cleansing the body by washing and bathing in water was always customary in Israel. The washing of their clothes was an important means of sanctification imposed on the Israelites even before the law was given at Mt. Sinai (Ex 19:10). The use of water for cleansing was used symbolically as well in such passages as Eze 36:25 where God says, "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities . . ." We do not believe that the practice of baptism for the remission of sins as taught in the New Testament was based in any way on the Old Testament, however the Old Testament washings with or in water that were for the purpose of physical cleansing can be seen as a type or shadow of New Testament baptism, which is for the purpose of spiritual cleansing (1 Peter 3:21).

Toward the beginning of the Christian era, the Jews adopted (as a custom unrelated to Divine guidance) the custom of baptizing proselytes seven days after their circumcision. A series of specific interrogations made it possible to judge the real intentions of the candidate who wished to adopt the Jewish religion. After submitting to these interrogations, he was circumcised and later baptized before witnesses. In the baptism, he was immersed naked in a

pool of flowing water; when he rose from the pool, he was a true son of Israel. After their baptism, new converts were allowed access to the sacrifices in the Temple.

The Baptism of John

When John the Baptist came on the scene in the first century Jewish world, his teaching included the necessity of baptism. The people of his day were familiar with the act or practice of baptism as just discussed. However, John's baptism was not based on or authorized by the Jewish law or pagan religious customs and traditions. John was called to preach by God, armed only with the Word of God (Luke 3:2). Jesus tells us that the baptism that John taught was from heaven, not from men (Matt 21:25). When John preached a baptism for the remission of sins, the people heard and obeyed. They submitted to the baptism that had been authorized by God. It was the first time in human history in which a person had the opportunity to be baptized for the remission of his sins, pagan and Jewish religious customs, notwithstanding. A necessary refinement in the administration of baptism had to be made following the death of Jesus, however, as Acts 19:1-7 points out. Rather than submitting to the baptism of John, which was a baptism of repentance, we can now be baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.

Sources

The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge. Baker Book House. 1960. Vol. Pg. 440-44, 449-44-50.

The Encyclopedia of Religion. McMillan. 1987. Vol 2. Pg 59-61. The Jewish Encyclopedia. KTAV Pub. House Inc. Vol. II. Pg 499-450.

The Plan of Salvation ***By Jon W. Quinn***

Plan #1

Announced by the apostles, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to new believers in Christ who asked what they must do:

"Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."
(ACTS 2:38)

Plan #2

On the back page of a tract, sinners were urged to pray this prayer to be saved. This prayer is not found in the Bible; nor were alien sinners commanded to pray for their forgiveness.

The Sinner's Prayer:

"O' Lord, I accept that I am a sinner and that Jesus died for my sins. I now accept Him into my heart as Lord and Savior asking for your mercy and forgiveness in His name. Amen."

The editors of Expository Files are happy with plan #1 and thankful to the God of all grace for it. We cannot recommend Plan #2 at all, but will change our minds when this prayer can be shown to us in the Bible.

Final Page

*Learning To Love Your Neighbor,
Without Being Like Your Neighbor*

(Matt. 5:43-48)

Warren E. Berkley

As the Pharisees advanced their agenda they said: "***You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.***" Jesus responded: "...love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect," (Matt. 5:43-48).

We should willingly embrace this obligation for the good of our neighbor/enemy/brethren/all people, for the sake of our character, and to the glory of God: **Love your neighbor.** Paul said, "Owe no one anything except

to love one another,” and Peter said, “honor all people,” (Rom. 13:3, 1 Pet. 2:17).

What does it mean to love your neighbor? It means you seek what is best for them and help them in every legitimate way you are able to respond. It involves an attitude of honor and respect in keeping with the example of Christ. This love should keep us from the kind of partiality James condemned (Jas. 2:1-13). It should work in us a measure of patience, kindness and mercy toward others, “for judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy,” (Jas. 2:13). Let us speak the truth in love to others (Eph. 4:15), and treat people as we desire to be treated (Matt. 7:12). In every respect love is shown by God, we should seek to develop our love for others (Matt. 5:43-48).

While all of the above is relatively simple and commonly recognized, there is a matter we should attend to. **Within our purpose to love our neighbor, we must not become so accommodating and pleasing that we become like him!** Let’s admit that pressure and face it. It is not some imaginary hypothetical. If we are the least uninformed about the true nature of biblical love, and we become overly occupied with “loving” our neighbor, we can reach a place of compromise, where there is an unhealthy submission to someone’s influence. We sometimes describe this as peer pressure, but we think of group influence in that regard. I’m talking about, **seeking to please some individual to the point you imitate the object of your love!** In the extreme, you dress like them, talk like them, join them in their pursuits of pleasure and seek their approval in that conformity. In more subtle means, we may begin to act like the people we love.

Love, as taught in the Bible and captured by the word “agape,” does not require that we imitate our neighbor, and **we are forbidden to follow any but Christ** (Matt. 10:38). In point of eternal truth, the best way to love your neighbor is to show them Christ in you! If you become a mirror or double of your neighbor, you have fallen short of mature discipleship and you have failed to truly love your neighbor. Moral/spiritual compromise can creep into our lives in so many understated ways.

We do not value our neighbor by accepting all they do! We value them by conveying to them – through the influence of our friendship, words and deeds – the praiseworthiness of the Lamb, the love of the Father and the

truth of the Word. We adore others in the highest sense, when we adore Him who first loved us.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God,” (Rom. 12:1,2).