

G S O U N D O F G R A C E

... it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace ... Hebrews 13:9

Issue 119—July/August 2005

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Thoughts on the Book of Ecclesiastes

– Part Nine

John G. Reisinger

The author of Ecclesiastes writes from the point of view of a person seeking meaning and purpose in life without reference to, or acknowledgement of, God. The conclusion he reaches at every point is that life is “meaningless, meaningless, all is meaningless.” To escape meaninglessness, the Seeker must acknowledge that God exists and is in control. However, God’s sovereignty presents the Seeker with multiple difficulties. If God is in control, how does the Seeker explain the terrible plight of humanity? How does he reconcile divine sovereignty with the unrighteousness that reigns in God’s good creation, even in the

very halls of justice? Why does God allow the oppression of the helpless? How can the triumph of the wicked over the godly in this life be part of God’s plan? We, too, echo the Seeker’s questions. No matter how firmly we are convinced that there is a day of reckoning in the future, we wonder if there is no hope or help for the present.

In our last article, we outlined chapter 3:16 through 4:16 of Ecclesiastes as follows:

I. 3:16, 17: The halls of justice are filled with unrighteousness.

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Is there a Difference between Old Covenant and New Covenant Holiness?

Part Two

Murray McLellan

“Because it is written, ‘Be holy for I am holy.’” 1 Peter 1:16 (Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version)

In Part One of this article, we looked at the need for a biblical blueprint that will allow us to understand the content of any passage

of Scripture according to its correct context. We learned that the Bible contains progressive revelation, with earlier revelation of necessity being less complete than later revelation. The nature of the Bible as progressive revelation provides the framework within which we understand the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. The Old Covenant functions as prom-

ise/shadow to the New Covenant’s fulfillment/reality. With the New Covenant, God provides a new motivation for the obedience of his people ^{and} his great love expressed in the life and death of his Son on our behalf.

In the New Covenant, all the commandments are tied to Christ.

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- II. 3:18-21: Men, just like beasts, die.
- III. 4:1-3: Man is oppressed.
- IV. 4:4-6: Man is in constant rivalry.
- V. 4:7-12: Men are alone and isolated.
- VI. 4:13-16: Popularity is temporary.

The opening phrase of 3:16, "I saw something else" (NIV, *Moreover* in the ESV and NKJV) indicates a new section, which the Seeker introduces with a lament concerning wickedness in the halls of justice. He tries to understand the problem of corruption and wickedness in high places.

And I saw something else under the sun: In the place of judgment – wickedness was there, in the place of justice – wickedness was there. I thought in my heart, "God will bring to judgment both the righteous and the wicked, for there will be a time

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for every activity, a time for every deed." (Eccl. 3:16-17, NIV)

In the subsection that runs from verse 16 to verse 22, we find an observation (*I saw*, v.16), two passing comments (*I said . . . I said*, vv.17, 18-21), and then a conclusion (*So I saw*, v.22). The opening "I saw" indicates another observable problem (the Seeker has already compiled an impressive list of problems: pleasure, wisdom, folly, and work are all meaningless); the closing "I saw" presents the Seeker's philosophy in light of this new problem.

It is one thing to see oppression and wickedness at a personal level, but it is quite another to see them in the halls of justice. That is the worst kind of irony. God's purpose in instituting courts and tribunals was to protect the widow and the weak from the rich and the tyrant. When the very people who are appointed to uphold truth and justice use their position and power to destroy the very things they are appointed to uphold, society cannot long endure. When those sworn to uphold righteousness reject all moral values, wickedness of the worst kind must rule. When "might makes right" replaces "righteousness and truth," a society will quickly deteriorate into one ruled by animal lust and raw power. All men intuitively know that a wicked court system is the worst of evils. This acknowledgment is why the problem tears at the foundation of our faith.

The problem of corrupted justice also exists in the realm of religion and the church. When leaders of God's people no longer uphold God's truth and standards, but allow sin to flourish and their friends to make the rules, their churches will soon crumble from within. A corrupted church loses her positive influence on the broader culture. Even the world is amazed when a church leader openly sins or becomes a tyrant. They say, in amazement, "And he was a preacher."

Sound of Grace is a ministry of Grace Bible Fellowship of Maryland. It is published 10 times a year. The subscription price is \$10.00 per year. This is a paper unashamedly committed to the truth of God's sovereign grace and New Covenant Theology. We invite all who love these same truths to pray for us and help us financially.

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The only thing that can sustain an honest person in a wicked and ruthless society is belief in a sovereign God who, in his own fixed time, will bring every person into a final, righteous judgment. The truth of eternity is built into every human

Reisinger (Continued on page 4)

The Sabbath - Part Two

Lloyd Elias Scalyer

In Part One of this article, we examined the historical establishment of the Sabbath as part of the Decalogue in Exodus 20:8-11. We traced the biblical development of Sabbath restrictions and commandments, and noted the post-exilic expansion of pharisaism and synagogue meetings and their impact on Jewish Sabbath observance. Part Two will focus on the grace of God that changed a rabbi from a Sabbath Day keeper to a lover of him to whom the Sabbath pointed.

In my regular course of duties as the missionary in charge of the Messianic Hebrew Christian Fellowship, I send out specific mailings to Jewish homes and hand out tracts on the street and at special events. Some time ago, I received an urgent call from a woman regarding a tract that we used. She wanted to know if we had any more information regarding Dr. Max Wertheimer. Her mother had been in a Bible study that Dr. Wertheimer taught a number of years ago in Ohio, where he was pastor of a church. She could not stop talking about his godliness and understanding of the Scriptures. What a testimony for Dr. Wertheimer's love for his Lord and Savior! He went from observing the Sabbath Day to loving his Lord who was Lord of the Sabbath. He went from worshiping one day in seven to worshiping twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

Rabbi Dr. Max Wertheimer was born in Germany of Orthodox parents. The first fifteen years of his life were saturated with training in

Orthodox Judaism. He studied the Talmud and the Torah, as well as the commentaries of noted Jewish scholars. Although he continued to read the daily prayers and attend the Synagogue regularly, his worldly friends and acquaintances led him into the sinful pleasures of the world around him. His parents became upset and sent him to the Hebrew Union College in Ohio to continue his studies. In spite of major cultural differences between the two countries, he made adjustments and finished his eight years of training in only seven years.

After he became a believer in Y'shua, he looked back on that period of his life and made some insightful comments. He says, "My religious views were fostered by tradition, pride, and prejudice. I thought Judaism was the greatest religion as well as the most rational. I believed the theory of evolution, had modernistic notions of free thought, held some socialistic doctrines and thought that Moses the prophet excelled in genius and perfection and that there was no one equal to him. I loved to go to the theater, attend symphony concerts, read fiction as well as worldly literature and play my violin. I was swayed by the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life."

Dr. Wertheimer was diligent in his study of all Jewish religious literature; he studied homiletics and hermeneutics according to rabbinical principles. He was completely proficient in the translation of Hebrew into English and had a full

knowledge of Jewish history. He was ordained and became rabbi of his first synagogue, where he served for ten years. He contributed much to his congregation's knowledge of social, industrial and economic problems of the day and received many tokens of affection from his flock. Additionally, he spoke on monotheism, ethical culture and the moral systems of the Jewish people. He looked forward to Sabbath mornings when he gave addresses on the Pentateuch. On Sundays, he taught from eight in the morning to five in the evening with only an hour's break for dinner.

As a popular public speaker, Dr. Wertheimer was often asked to speak in Christian churches. He recalled quite vividly the day he proudly stood before an audience of professing Christians and told them why he was a Jew and would not believe in their Christ as his Messiah and Savior. He gloried in the Reform Judaism that acknowledged no need of an atoning sacrifice for sin. Reform Judaism is a religion of ethics that quiets qualms of conscience through smug self-righteousness. In that audience, a humble, elderly woman sat and prayed, "Oh God, bring Dr. Wertheimer to realize his utter need of that Savior he so boastfully rejects! Bring him if necessary, to the very depths in order that he may know his need of my Lord Jesus Christ."

Dr. Wertheimer saw no need for Jesus. He was perfectly satisfied with his life. His wife was young,

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being (3:11): the world calls belief in an eternal justice ‘pie in the sky’; the Christian makes it a pillow upon which to lay his or her weary head. (See Psalm 73:17 and Genesis 18:25 for examples of saints who were comforted by the expectation of a future judgment.) The Seeker reasons that since there is a time for everything (his theme in 3:1-8), there will be a time for judgment as well.

Verses 18-21 seem, at first glance, to be thrown into the discussion without regard to context, but such is not the case.

I also thought, “As for men, God tests them so that they may see that they are like the animals. Man’s fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; man has no advantage over the animal. Everything is meaningless. All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return. Who knows if the spirit of man rises upward and if the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth?” (Eccl. 3:18-21, NIV)

The Seeker has considered delayed judgment from the perspective of God – no matter how long it takes, judgment will surely occur. Now he considers it from a human perspective. One reason God postpones judgment and permits wickedness is to allow man to reveal how depraved his heart really is. Man, in spite of education and philosophy, is still capable of living worse than animals do. When we ask, “Why does God allow men to get away with these things,” the correct response is, “They really don’t get away with anything.” There is an eternal tomorrow. There is an ultimate accountability. There is a day of justice. All men will face God as judge; in his chamber hall, absolute righteousness will prevail. An unbe-

liever wrote a Christian editor of a small newspaper in the mid-west and said, “I plowed one of my fields on a Sunday; I planted corn in the same field on a Sunday; I cultivated it on Sundays; I harvested it on a Sunday, and I reaped the best crop I ever had. So much for your belief in God.” The editor, who believed and taught that the Sabbath was still binding, replied, “God does not settle all of His accounts in November.”

The only thing that can sustain an honest person in a wicked and ruthless society is belief in a sovereign God who, in his own fixed time, will bring every person into a final, righteous judgment.

The Seeker shows that, from an *under the sun* position, man is indeed not any better than an animal is. Under certain circumstances, man will turn from reason and truth and follow the law of the jungle. Might will dictate right, even in the halls of justice. Even more emphatic is the fact that humans, just like animals, wind up as worm food. It matters little whether a person is buried in a \$50,000 casket or if his or her body is thrown on the dump. Like an animal, the human dies and returns to dust. If human beings honestly face reality, verses 18-20 will grate on their consciences. It does not matter what outstanding lives they lead, death comes to all, and human corpses are no more significant than animal remains.

Human beings are sinners who must die and face God in judgment. This fact is a caveat that follows every accolade human beings may

earn. Naaman’s leprosy illustrates this concept. In 2 Kings 5:1, we have a description of a remarkable man.

Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him the LORD had given victory to Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy. (NIV)

Notice the last phrase, “*But he had leprosy.*” Naaman was a commander – *but he was a leper*; he was a great man – *but he was a leper*; he was highly regarded – *but he was a leper*; he was victorious in battle – *but he was a leper*; he was a valiant soldier – *but he was a leper*. It does not matter what you could say about Naaman, or how true each statement was, you would have to add, “**but he was a leper.**” The same is true of every son and daughter of Adam. No matter what honor or title you bestow upon him or her, you must add, “**but he/she is a sinner who will die and face God in judgment.**” Neither personal attainment nor societal value matter; all human beings are sinners who will die. They may have lived in palaces as privileged royalty or in cardboard boxes as homeless bums, but they all will die and face God in judgment. Man will die, just as animals will die. No matter how high he towered over his contemporaries in wealth, power, or attainment, the angel of death will lower him to the same level as a dog or a cow.

The Seeker is demonstrating that death is the time and place that levels all men, without exception, to the same status. The burial practices of some of our Anabaptist forebears illustrate this truth. A Mennonite cemetery is radically different from other graveyards. All of the grave-stones are exactly the same size, color, and shape. They are rectan-

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DEBTORS AT THE CAVE OF ADULLAM

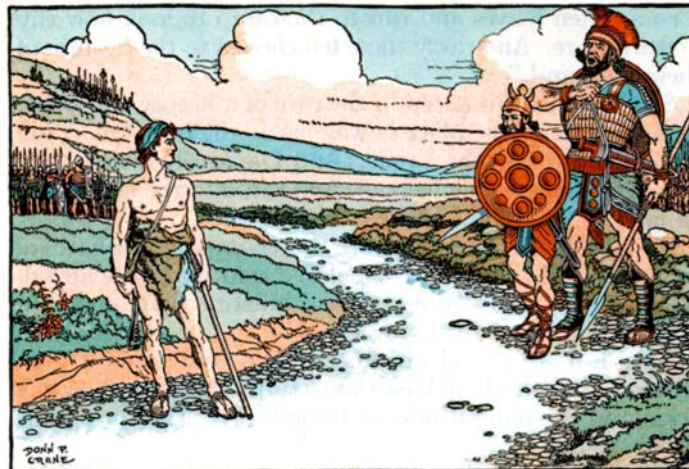
Mike McInnis

And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men.
1 Samuel 22:2

The Lord seldom does things according to man's logic. When men are preparing for battle they always, assume that the key to victory is to follow the advice of the old Civil war general, Nathan B. Forrest, who purportedly said, "Get thar fustest with the mostest." Yet the Lord instructed Gideon to go into battle with 300 men against a force that vastly out numbered them. Common sense would say that a shepherd lad armed only with a slingshot and a few stones was no match for a seasoned warrior who stood nine and a half feet tall. Yet David (in the power of God) slew Goliath and ultimately cut off his head with Goliath's own sword. Daniel could not possibly survive a night alone with ravenous lions yet he lived while his accusers were ultimately destroyed.

The scripture says "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." (Prov 14:12) So it is that men, in their supposed wisdom, think that they can win favor with GOD by their own righteousness. Some think this right-

eousness can be found in moral living. So they take great comfort in believing themselves to be honorable, by comparing themselves to those who are morally lax. They see sin as something other people do. They may join campaigns against immoral behavior and take pride in being upright citizens. Yet when the Lord Jesus walked upon the earth he kept company with drunkards and harlots (see Mat.11:19) and said to those who judged themselves to be righteous, "Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him." (Matt 21:31-32)



According to the reasoning of men, God is pleased by their activity and service, whether to God or their fellow man. In fact, most think

that by doing good deeds to others they can earn favor with God and enhance their likelihood of acceptance by him. They do not know that it is "Not by works of righteousness which we have done" (Tit.3:5) wherein we have received his mercy.

Some think that their righteousness is demonstrated by their faithful religious service. They go about saying prayers, going to church meetings, giving of their time, money, and talent assured in their own minds that what they are doing must be pleasing to the Lord. They think that their "righteousness in these things" is more acceptable to him than the actions of those who are irreligious or atheists. Surely, it must count for something. The Pharisee's were the epitome of extremely devoted religious men, yet the Lord said "except your right-

eousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt 5:20)

Many marveled at this revelation and said among themselves, who then can be saved? The answer to that question is that no man can be saved by his own righteousness. That which men judge to be righteous is no righteousness at all. "There is none righteous, no, not one." (Rom. 3:10) "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do

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gular, white, and about nine inches wide and eighteen inches high. They contain no information other than name, and date of birth and death. A Mennonite cemetery constantly reminds visitors that death levels all men. In our present society, men may commit any number of crimes and oppressive actions, and avoid punishment by bribing a corrupt judicial system, but they will not be able to buy off the angel of death or bribe the final judge. Verses 19-21 show us what verse 18 means.

Man's fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; man has no advantage over the animal. Everything is meaningless. All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return. Who knows if the spirit of man rises upward and if the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth?" (Eccl. 3:19-21, NIV)

Jehovah Witnesses (and others who deny the doctrine of hell or an afterlife) misuse these verses. We must consider these verses in their context within the Book of Ecclesiastes. Remember, this conception of reality comes from a man who thinks (and records his thoughts) without any reference to God's self-revelation. This is an *under the sun* view of life and reality. Anyone who looks at life without reference to God will come to the same conclusions as the Seeker does. Those who adopt the *under the sun* explanation of life will live in the light of the Seeker's hopeless conclusion. Man cannot believe he is no different from an animal without starting to live like an animal.

On the surface, it appears that since both men and animals die, there is no real difference between them. Man has no advantage over the animal. If death ends every-

thing, if there is no human existence after death, this conclusion is correct. Does a close reading of the text support this idea? First, the author bases his denial of intrinsic differences on the word *fate* (v. 19). He assumes that what can be observed of fate is all there is. This assumption leads to the belief that the grave is the ultimate fate of all living creatures. This conclusion does not consider any kind of afterlife, since that is not an observable phenomenon. If the only comparison you can make between men and animals is that they both die, then indeed, "all is meaningless" and man appears to be no different from the beast.

Second, "all go to the same place" (v. 20) is another way of saying "all die and go to the grave." All go back to the ground from which they were created. Everything that has the breath of life must lose it; the grave is the final stop for all. The point the Seeker drives home is that death not only levels all men, rich and poor, it levels all breathing creatures, and proves that man is, in the end, no better than any other animal is.

Please note that the Seeker is not comparing believers and unbelievers. He is not talking about heaven and hell; he is comparing man with beasts. He writes, "the spirit of *man* rises upward," not "the spirit of *godly men* ..." and "the spirit of *the animal* goes down into the earth," not "the spirit of *ungodly men* ..." The spirits of all human beings, saved and lost, go upward; that means the spirits of all people return to God. Some will remain forever with the Lord and some will be sent away from the Lord into everlasting damnation. On the other hand, the animal goes into the ground and is no more. Man has immortality but the animal does not.

Verse 21 posits a question im-

PLICIT with despair. We could paraphrase the verse, "In the final analysis who, if anybody, really knows what happens after death? Nobody knows for sure! Who can prove beyond question if the spirit of man rises upward and if the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth?" As I read that, I want to shout, "**I know, and I know for sure! I know because God has clearly revealed it in his Holy Word.**" However, Christians are the only people who can know with certainty, because they have talked with someone who was dead and who came back to life.

"I know someone who was dead but is now alive. I talk to him every morning and so can you." Only a faith in a resurrected Lord who has conquered death and the grave can make that kind of a statement.

Some years ago, I spoke to the graduating nurses at our local hospital. Every year, the hospital asked a Jewish rabbi, a Catholic priest, and a Protestant clergyman each to lecture the student nurses on "How to help persons of different faiths die." I learned that two patients had recently died, and all of these nurses had attended those two people. Some of the nurses had been present at the time of the patients' deaths. I started my lecture by saying, "Before you can teach someone how to do something you must know how to do it yourself. *Do you yourself know how to die?*" The graduates were not paying close attention. I continued, "If that had been you, instead of Mr. Sweeny, in the bed in Room 204, would you have known how to die when someone pulled the sheet over your head?" Suddenly, I had their full at-

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attractive and accomplished. He was the rabbi of the B'nai Yeshorum Synagogue. He lived in a beautiful home and enjoyed a place of prominence in his community, and had spoken in every denominational church in his area. The Ministerial Association elected him as an honorary member and he served as chaplain in the Masonic Lodge. He fared sumptuously every day. Unexpectedly, all that changed. His wife became seriously ill and died. He became a distraught widower with two small children. Sleepless, he walked the streets, striving to find something that would make him forget the void in his life.

His dreams had been shattered and he could not find comfort. Although he called on the God of his fathers, the heavens seemed as brass. How could he speak words of comfort to others when his own sorrow had brought him to despair? He delved into Spiritism, Theosophy and Christian Science, only to find them futile and hopeless.

He decided that he must resign as rabbi and take time to think through things. One thing in particular perplexed him: "Where was the spirit and soul of my loved one who had made my existence so sweet? What had become of all her faculties, the intents and purposes of that active mind?" He turned to the Bible for an answer.

Again, he studied Judaism, but it answered no questions and it satisfied no craving in his heart. Then he started to read the New Testament, comparing it with the Old. In the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, he was perplexed by the expression "my righteous servant." Puzzled, he wondered about the identity of this one who was going to bear the iniquity of Israel. He decided that it could not mean Israel, for the prophet spoke of them as a sinful

nation, laden with iniquity. Who then was it?

He began to study the broader context in which Isaiah 53 was set, and in Isaiah 50:6 he found, "I gave My back to the smiters." Then he read how the chapter began: "Thus saith Jehovah." He asked himself, "Does God have a back? Did He give it to the smiters?" Then he read, "He gave His cheeks to them that pluck off the hair." He wondered to himself, does God actually have cheeks? And will someone pluck off his beard?

"He hid not His face from shame and spitting." He asked himself, "When did Jehovah have these human characteristics? When and why did He suffer these indignities?" Psalm 110:1 further perplexed him, "The LORD says to my Lord ..."

In utter confusion, he began to read the prophet Isaiah from the beginning. He was abruptly stopped at the sixth verse of chapter nine: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulders: His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." This was most incomprehensible to him! He was faced with the doctrine of the Triune Godhead and had to deal with the popular doxology of Judaism. "Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheynu, Adonai, Echod." "Hear oh Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord, is one." Judaism bases their entire philosophy upon that one word "Echod" (one).

His testimony continues in his own words:

I had been taught by the rabbis that Echod means absolute unity. I began to study that word and found to my amazement it was used of Adam and Eve, who became one. It was used when the spies returned from Canaan with a cluster of grapes (Eshol Echod), and again when the "men of Judah stood up as one man" (Ish Echod). Suddenly, I was struck with the error I had believed and proclaimed through my ministry. Echod cannot mean absolute unity, but a composite unity. Next, I began to search for the name of Jesus in the Old Testament. In my study, I found that two-hundred seventy-five years before Christ, King Ptolemy Philadelphus summoned men from Palestine and commanded them to translate the Hebrew Scriptures into the Greek vernacular. After translating the Pentateuch, then went on to the book of

Joshua, which they called the book of "Jesus," written with circumflex over it, to show that there had been a suppression of the Hebrew that the Greek could not express.

When Joshua went into Canaan with the other eleven spies, he was called "Yehoshuah" (Jehovah is Savior). That is exactly

what the word 'Jesus' means. I could hold out in unbelief no longer. I was convinced of the truth God in Christ Jesus. I cried, "Lord, I believe that Thou as Jehovah Yesous has made atonement for me. I believe that Jehovah Yesous died for me. I believe that thou has made provision for me. From henceforth I will publicly confess Yeshuah as my Savior and Lord." Thus, after months of searching, I was convinced that

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tention. I then asked, "How would you like to talk to someone who had been dead and came back to life? I know someone who was dead but is now alive. I talk to him every morning and so can you." Only a faith in a resurrected Lord who has conquered death and the grave can make that kind of a statement.

Although the Seeker is not presenting a biblical theology of death, he indicates that he retains remnants of his faith. In Ecclesiastes 12:6-7, the Seeker is clear concerning the subject. There he writes that the spirit returns to God who gave it, a parallel to the "spirit of man rises upward" in verse 21.

Remember him – before the silver cord is severed, or the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, or the wheel broken at the well, and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. (Eccl. 12:6, 7, NIV)

The author concludes this section (3:22) with another reality check that leads to the same conclusion he has presented in verses 11 through 13 and verse 21: since nobody knows what happens after death, the best thing for man to do is to enjoy his work while he is alive.

So I saw that there is nothing better for a man than to enjoy his work, because that is his lot. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him?

If God really controls all events (3:1-15), has a definite purpose in allowing all things –including the worst of tyranny and injustice – (3:16-20), and commands the ultimate destiny of all creatures (21), then wisdom dictates we should gratefully pursue the earthly responsibilities God gives us and we should enjoy their fruit. Once we

admit to God's sovereignty, we should begin to enjoy any and every pleasure that comes to us from the hand of God. The words *his lot*, in verse 22, remind me of one of my favorite hymns. "What ever my lot/ thou hast taught me to say/ it is well, it is well, with my soul."¹ This is true even when "sorrows like sea billows" threaten to overturn our frail vessel.

Once we admit to God's sovereignty, we should begin to enjoy any and every pleasure that comes to us from the hand of God.

The question, "For who can bring him to see what will happen after him," does not anticipate an answer because it does not consider God's revelation. For the person who views things from *under the sun*, there is no ultimate resolution to his or her quest for reality. The writer is not concerned with knowing future events; his concern is with eternal destinies. Eternity is hidden from the man who rejects God's revelation. However, the child of God knows not only that there is a heaven to be gained; he knows also how to gain it. As for specific events in this life, the believer does not know what tomorrow holds, but he does know who holds tomorrow. God is kind to hide the future from us. The hymn writer was correct when he wrote, "If we could see beyond today/ ... we often say/ but God in love a veil doth throw/ across our way."² God intends us to enjoy today. If we knew everything that was going to happen next week, we would concentrate on the bad to the extent we would not be able to enjoy the good of today.

The section from 4:1 through 10:20 continues to picture life *under the sun*. One writer has de-

scribed the section this way.

From this point it is not easy to trace a clear consecutive argument. Later on (11:1 – 12:8) a note of exhortation breaks in, moving the argument forward again. Between 4:1 – and 10:20 Ecclesiastes resembles the Book of Proverbs, with short epigrams dealing with various aspects of life. Groups of sayings, however, can be seen clustered around particular themes. Every unit between 5:8 and 6:12 deals in some way with wealth; each unit of 4:1-16 bears on the need for companionship; chs. 9:13 – 10:20 directly consider the limits of wisdom and the various manifestations of folly. The book bears evidence, therefore, of structure and arrangement, although it is at times difficult to discern. It is also conspicuous that the presuppositions in 1:2 – 3:22 continue to underlie each theme taken up. The vanity of "life under sun" comes in for heavy fire; the life of faith in a sovereign God is urged from time to time as the only remedy.

It is best, therefore, to treat the middle of Ecclesiastes as a guide to life "under the sun," presenting a series of major issues, each in turn from the viewpoint of "under the sun" limitation and from the viewpoint of faith. The Preacher faces the big issues; the hardships of life and the companionship it demands, poverty and wealth, the vexations of circumstances of life and of man himself, the authority of kings and authority misapplied, the limits of wisdom and the encroachment of folly. "Look!" he says in effect. "This is what it is really like. Can you face life in this world as it really is? There is only one way to do so." The various themes overlap considerably, so that several topics are considered more than once from different angles.³

In the beginning of chapter 4, the author returns to the subject of

Reisinger (Continued on page 17)

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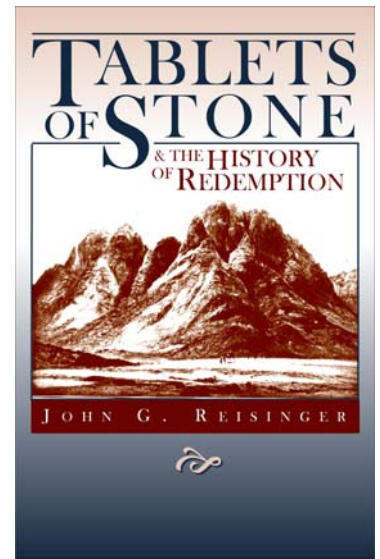
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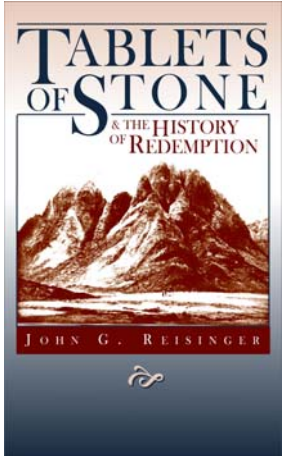
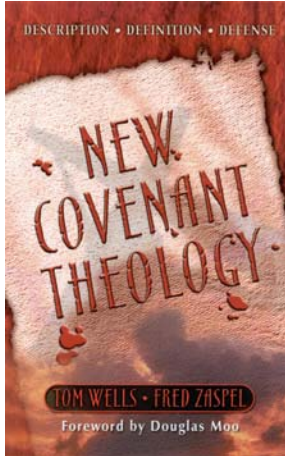
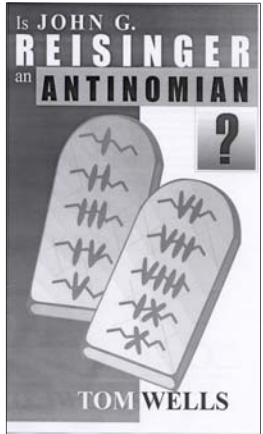
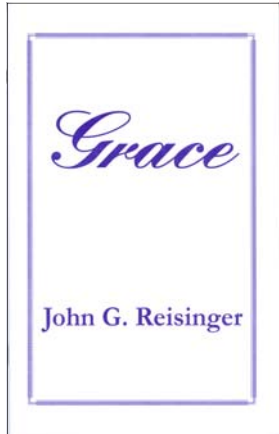
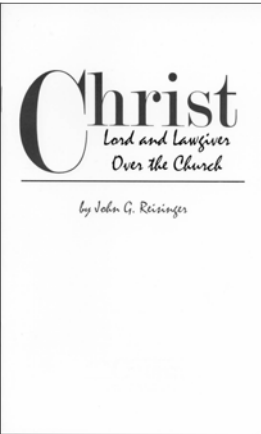
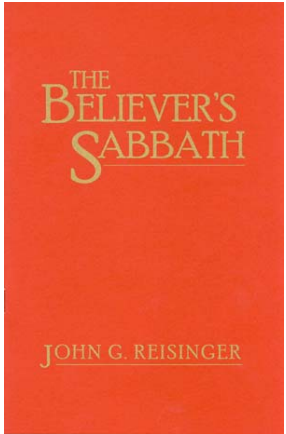
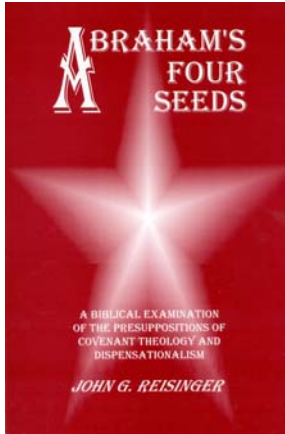
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Scalyer (Continued from page 7)

Jesus was the righteous servant of Jehovah, (Jehovah-Tsidkenu) 'The Lord our righteousness.'

While I had served as a rabbi, I had yearned to give the bereaved some hope and comfort, but I could not give what I did not possess. Now I could approach those in heartbreaking grief and tragedy and give them the satisfying words of the Lord Jesus, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." And again, "Verily, verily I say unto you: He that heareth My Word, and believeth on him that sent Me, hath (possesses now,) everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."

There is but one eternal life, and one source of eternal life; that is God's Son. What a great and glorious message we, His redeemed ones, are commissioned to deliver today.

Dr. Wertheimer publicly confessed Jesus as his Messiah and Lord on March 30, 1904, in the Central Baptist Church in Dayton, Ohio. After graduating from the Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, he was ordained and served as a pastor for five years in Ada, Ohio. After that, he became a Pastor-Evangelist with the New Covenant Mission in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. After spending two and a half years with the Mission, he received a call to become a freelance preacher of the gospel to both Jew and Gentile. He was continually in great demand as a Bible teacher, expositor of the word, and evangelist.

3. What Are the Implications of the Sabbath day under the New Covenant?

While the New Covenant Scrip-

tures do not command people to worship on the Sabbath day (Saturday), it is also true that they do not forbid worship on the Sabbath day (Saturday). The same statement applies to Sunday worship. Messiah Jesus went to the synagogues to speak to people on the Sabbath because he was sent to the lost sheep of the House of Israel and the synagogues were where they congregated (Matt. 15:24). The Apostle Paul wrote that the gospel was to go to the Jew first and then to the Greek; he also went into the synagogues on Saturday to speak with the Jewish people.

There is no command in the New Covenant Scriptures that tells born-again believers when they must have their corporate worship. There also is no scriptural injunction in the New Covenant that tells the children of God how their service is to be conducted.

It is significant to note that the only convocation given the importance of a place in the Decalogue is the Sabbath. The Sabbath rest was given only to Israel. The Scriptures inform us of many godly men who lived before the Decalogue was given to Israel and none of them were instructed to observe the Sabbath. The Sabbath was not given to the Nations, but only to Israel. It was not even given to Abraham as the father of the Jewish nation. If it had been given to Abraham, then believers after the crucifixion of Messiah would have possible grounds on which to claim that legally the Sabbath should be followed as the day of worship, but without any of the Old Covenant legal requirements, because they are spiritual seed of Abraham. But it was not given to Abraham or Isaac; it was given as a law and command-

ment only to the children of Jacob.

Some may argue that the children of Jacob were in the loins of Isaac and Abraham and therefore the Sabbath is for any who are in Abraham by the Spirit, a sort of retroactive Sabbath requirement. The fact that the Sabbath was given only to Israel as a nation in the flesh and not to Ishmael or Esau invalidates their argument.

The Lord Almighty, for reasons known only to himself, chose to give that day of rest to Israel and not to the Nations around them. Even after the Sovereign Lord gave Israel the Sabbath, he did not spe-



cifically instruct nor encourage the Gentiles who became his followers in their own countries to adhere to it. The perfect example would be Nineveh.

While the Sabbath was a specific day, it also was a state of mind. For those who observed it, the Sabbath was to transform them from the natural realm of their daily activities to the realm of spiritual adoration. It was to increase their love as well as their fear for God Almighty-El Shaddai. Messiah Jesus said that he is Lord of the Sabbath Day (Matt. 12:8, Mark 2:28 and Luke 6:5). For a believer, Messiah Jesus is their Sabbath rest as

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Scalyer (Continued from page 13)

well as their spiritual Sabbath food. He and he alone is their burden bearer, their salvation, their Savior, their Lord, their bridegroom and their peace. There is now no condemnation for them. They are in Messiah Jesus. They walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit (Rom. 8:1).

They have not received the spirit of bondage to fear, but they have received the spirit of adoption whereby they cry Abba, Father. The Spirit of God is a witness with their spirit that they are his children. They are the heirs of God and joint heirs with Messiah.

Believers suffer with him so that they may also be glorified with him (Rom. 8:15-17).

Believers are a “new creation, old things have passed away, behold all things have become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). Those who are reborn by the Spirit of the Living God are strangers and sojourners in this world. They are the spiritual descendants of Abraham who looked for a city that had foundations whose builder and maker was God (Heb. 11:10). The true home for these believers is in the heavenly realms—the abode of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. A believer has been raised up in the spirit and now sits with Messiah Jesus in the heavenly realms. In the ages to come, the Father will show great riches of his grace toward us through Messiah Jesus (Eph. 2: 6-7).

To be continued.

McInnis (Continued from page 5)

fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” (Isa.64:6)

The gospel (good news) of the Lord Jesus Christ is that he has obtained redemption for sinners. He has become the righteousness of those who have none of their own to claim before Almighty God. In the days of David’s habitation in the cave of Adullam there were many who were drawn to him. Those who became his followers were not upstanding and prosperous citizens. They were those who were in trouble with the law, in debt, discontent, and in distress. In general terms they were undesirables. But their unworthiness in the sight of men in general was exactly the reason they were drawn to David, a man who gave them hope.

Only as a man is made to see and know his own hopeless condition will he seek the Lord for aid. As long as he holds out some expectation for obtaining favor with God by his own works, he will never believe the Gospel nor find any comfort therein. When a man knows himself to be a condemned sinner without excuse then that man, by the grace of God, will fly to the LORD for help and according to the scripture will find it. *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”* (Rom.10:13).

Poor sinners, sing the Lamb that died,
(What theme can sound so sweet!)
His drooping head, His streaming side,
His pierced hands and feet;
With all that scene of suffering love,
Which faith presents to view;
For now He lives and reigns above,
And lives and reigns for you.

Joseph Hart (1712-1768)

He Who Counts the Stars

(by Charles Spurgeon)

"He heals the brokenhearted, binding up their wounds. He counts the stars and calls them all by name. How great is our Lord! His power is absolute! His understanding is beyond comprehension!" Psalm 147:3-5

He who counts the stars and calls them by their names, is in no danger of forgetting His own children! He knows your case as thoroughly as if you were the only creature He ever made, or the only saint He ever loved!

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McLellan (Continued from page 1)

Wives, submit to your husbands ... as to the Lord. Husbands, love your wives ... just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for her. Children, obey your parents ... in the Lord. Servants, suffer under your masters ... as to Christ. Give ... as Christ became poor and gave himself – oh, what an indescribable gift! Forgive ... as Christ forgave you. Be kind to one another and walk in love ... as Christ also has loved us. Truly, our love of Christ is the issue, the wellspring from which all else in our lives flows. The New Testament Scriptures do not call us to moral behavior divorced from Christ. They do not simply say, “do this,” or “do not do that.” Grace, not moralism, motivates the believer.

You cannot be justified by the law, and you cannot be sanctified by the law. The book of Galatians is clear about this. Additionally, Romans 5:20 tells us that the law covenant breeds sin. In the New Covenant, grace takes care of both justification and sanctification. We are justified and granted forgiveness (i.e. washed clean; born of water), and we are sanctified and granted a new heart (i.e. born of Spirit).

The preaching of the law will not empower anyone to live a holy life. (I believe Romans 7 illustrates this clearly). The power for holy living comes from preaching Christ, the holy one who suffered under sin, to the one who loves him. “...whom having not seen, we love” (1 Pet. 1:8). The Lord has promised the crown of life to those who love him (James 1:12).

When I ponder that he who is without sin did not condemn me – a spiritual adulterer, caught in the very act. I am overwhelmed. I am guilty, yet Jesus dispelled all my accusers and declared authorita-

tively, “Neither do I condemn you.” How can this be? It is because he stooped low and died, condemned in my place. Such grace motivates me to go and sin no more (see John 8:1-12).

A More Complete Picture

The law covenant was weak and unprofitable.

“For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.” (Heb. 7:18-19)

“For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. ... In that He says, ‘A new covenant,’ He has made the first obsolete.” (Heb. 8:7, 13a)

You cannot be justified by the law, and you cannot be sanctified by the law. In the New Covenant, grace takes care of both justification and sanctification.

That first covenant could not externally transform a physically redeemed people into a spiritually holy people. The Mosaic legislation spelled out in clear detail exactly what was allowed and what was forbidden. This kind of explicit detail is necessary in a law that governs a population made up mostly of unbelievers. While the law provided comprehensive particulars about every aspect of life, it was powerless to change the heart, to clear the conscience, or to produce love for God. Under the New Covenant, Christ informs his people of what pleases God, and he enables them to obey out of love. When I

sin blatantly, it is not that I do not know it is wrong, but rather that my love has grown cold.

There is a teaching that says the law pushes you to Christ to be justified, and then Jesus pushes you back to the law and Moses to be sanctified. The truth is, however, that the law demands perfection and cannot bless anything less than that (see Deut. 28:1, 2, 14, 15).

You cannot render to that law the obedience it demands and rightly deserves. Even as the old priesthood has passed away, so has that old law – both fulfilled in the greater. “*For the priesthood being changed of necessity there is also a change of the law*” (Heb. 7:12). In the remainder of this article, we will consider some of the ways in which the law has changed.

In the Old Testament, one of the ways in which Israelites could stay away from sin was by hacking their pagan neighbors to death. In 2 Chronicles, God rebukes Jehoshaphat the king through Jehu the seer because the king had been too kind and loving to the wicked (2 Chron. 19:1-2). Earlier, Samuel rebukes Saul and tells him that the Lord has taken away the kingdom from him for not hacking Agag to pieces (1 Sam. 15:18 - 33). In the New Covenant era, the law is different.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, 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

McLellan (Continued on page 16)

McLellan (Continued from page 15)

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)

According to Jesus, our neighbor is anyone with whom we cross paths (Luke 10:29-37). Our mission is to gather the true people of God from the world by loving everyone as Christ loved us.

The command to love your neighbor is given in both the Old Testament and New Testament Scriptures (Mark 12:31; Lev. 19:18). The wording in both passages is the same, “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself,*” but the meaning changes in the New Covenant era. The context of the Old Testament passage shows that a neighbor in the old era was a fellow Jew.

*“You shall not take vengeance nor bear any grudge against **the children of your people**, but you shall love **your neighbor** as yourself; I am the Lord.”* (Lev. 19:18, emphasis added).

Now, in this New Covenant era, it would be an incredibly sinful act to live like an obedient Israelite. If I were to go and chop up my pagan neighbors because of their wicked false religion, I would be rebelling against God. I would be breaking the law of Christ my Lord. Destruction of pagans was a God-glorifying act for an Israelite in the Old Covenant era.¹ Obviously, the command has changed radically. New wine is put into new wineskins!

In Leviticus 19:2, we read the Old Covenant call to be holy. The rest of chapter 19 unfolds how to answer that call. For example:

Keep the Sabbaths (v. 3)

Do not eat any offering after the second day beyond the original day

of sacrifice (v. 6)

Do not steal (v. 11)

Love your neighbor as yourself (v. 18)

Do not mate different kinds of animals (v. 19)

Do not plant your field with two kinds of seed (v. 19)

Do not wear clothes woven of two kinds of material (v. 19)

Was an Old Covenant Jew morally obligated to observe these statutes? Yes! Did he or she sin if he or she planted mixed vegetables in the garden, wore blended fabric, or bred a mare with a donkey to produce a mule? Yes! We are not sinning if we plant carrots next to our tomatoes, or wear something other than one-hundred percent cotton, or breed a horse and a donkey. Under the Old Covenant, all those actions are sin. Under the New Covenant, they are not. All of God’s law is moral and is based on the holy, righteous character of God, but God unfolds his character progressively. First, he reveals himself in pictures and shadows; then, he reveals himself fully in Christ.

A commandment such as “you

Now, in this New Covenant era, it would be an incredibly sinful act to live like an obedient Israelite.

shall not murder” anticipated a righteousness, a holiness, that is more complete than merely abstaining from homicide. In the New Covenant, you shall not hate. In fact, you are to love as Christ loved us. The Old Testament law had sanctions for murder, but no sanc-

tions for hatred in the heart. The Old Testament law had sanctions for adultery, but no sanctions for lust in the heart.

In the new heavens and new earth there will be no signs posted that declare, “You shall not murder.” Apart from the fact that it would be hard to commit murder with resurrection bodies, and apart from the fact that we will be so transformed that murder will not cross our minds, we will love one another and we will not hate. Therefore, the law that forbids murder is obsolete, not because it is not a good law, but because it is not the law in its fullest expression. “You shall not murder” has been fulfilled and the perfect holiness it anticipated has come. Jesus’ community lives beyond Moses’ community. The Old Testament laws anticipated the full-orbed righteousness that Jesus brings in the New Covenant. What Jesus expects for citizens in his kingdom is a holiness that far outstrips the legal strictures of even the most disciplined of the Pharisees (Matt. 5:20).

The law would not pass away until its fulfillment came in Christ – that to which the Law and the Prophets pointed. “*Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.*” (Matt. 5:17-18). The condemnation would remain until Christ accomplished the redemption of his people from the curse of the Law.

The Old Testament anticipated the perfection of the New. The law covenant anticipated the new and better covenant. The Old Covenant had laws for sinners. The New Covenant has laws for saints. The Body of Christ has no hard-hearted,

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oppression.

Again I looked and saw all the oppression that was taking place under the sun: I saw the tears of the oppressed – and they have no comforter; power was on the side of their oppressors – and they have no comforter. And I declared that the dead, who had already died, are happier than the living, who are still alive. But better than both is he who has not yet been, who has not seen the evil that is done under the sun. (Eccl. 4:1-3, NIV)

We could all provide accounts of this kind of injustice. It is terrible to see the tears of the oppressed (usually the weak, the helpless, and the infirm). The hopeless ask, Where can we turn for help? only to find there is no help.

God, in the Old Testament Scriptures, constantly exhorts people to show compassion for the oppressed. The identity and status of the oppressors are irrelevant: an oppressive king over his people, a master over his slaves, or the rich over the poor. God repeatedly warns the oppressor of the eternal consequences of that kind of wickedness. The problem is compounded because the power to oppress is in the hands of the very people who alone could change the situation.

It is no coincidence in the fact that the power is found on the side of the oppressor, since it is power that most quickly breeds the habit of oppression. Paradoxically it limits the possibility of reform itself, because the more control the reformed wield, the more it tends to tyranny.⁴

Likeable and easy-going individuals sometimes seem to undergo personality changes when they become leaders. When they accept authority, they become unbearable. In

reality, they did not change; the new authority simply provided the first opportunity of revealing their true nature. “Power is on the side of the oppressor,” therefore, there is “no one to comfort the oppressed.” Even Job’s religious friends were the worst of comforters. Job called them “Physicians of no value” (Job 13:4). It would be cruel indeed to tell a slave beaten without provocation, “God has a wonderful plan for your life.” Religion, though well meaning, can aggravate some problems if its theological base is wrong.

After urging his readers to enjoy life, and then proceeding to tell them that oppression will probably make enjoyment impossible, the Seeker admits the case is grim. He sees it as so bad that he wishes he were dead or had never lived. The following two verses are, in a sense, the saddest lines in the entire book. If we feel the Seeker is overreacting, we may not have looked carefully enough at reality. As Christians, we have glimpsed a future that fills us with hope; that future does not excuse us from being honest with the present.

And I declared that the dead, who had already died, are happier than the living, who are still alive. But better than both is he who has not yet been, who has not seen the evil that is done under the sun. (Eccl. 4:2, 3, NIV)

As Christians, we have glimpsed a future that fills us with hope; that future does not excuse us from being honest with the present.

So much for the Seeker’s advice to do your best and enjoy life!

In 4:4-6, we see that human beings are in constant rivalry with

each other because of envy and selfishness. Selfishness continually manifests itself as one of the root causes of man’s misery.

And I saw that all labor and all achievement spring from man’s envy of his neighbor. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. The fool folds his hands and ruins himself. Better one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind. (NIV)

As the Seeker reflects on work, he realizes that the driving motivation in people is not the desire for pleasure: envy and ambition are the forces behind much of man’s activity. The KJV translates verse 4 this way: “Again, I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour. This is also vanity and vexation of spirit.” A man pursues a right and good work and does so in an honorable manner. His primary goal is to help the people in his community. The more successful he is, the more the people he has helped will envy him. Envy can even destroy a person physically, “A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones” (Prov. 14:30, NIV).

Great souls will continue to do what is right, but shallow people need very little excuse to stop. Verse 4 describes the envious reaction of those who receive or observe good works. Verse 5 underscores the base motivation of envy by showing what happens to those who do good works but receive no acclaim for them. Some people tire of the unrewarding rat race and resent being unappreciated by the people they help, and they simply drop out. They withdraw and do not care about anything or anybody and prove they, too, were motivated by love of praise. The Seeker describes such people as fools who fold their hands. The phrase “folds his hands”

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means to be deliberately idle. Proverbs graphically describes the sluggard:

Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest. How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest – and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man. (Prov. 6:6-11, NIV)

Many young people in the counter-culture of the sixties and early seventies discovered the truth of this maxim the hard way. They were correct to see the futility of selling one's soul for a mad race up the corporate ladder, but they went to the opposite extreme. These people withdrew from everything, including all work, and decided they could live on love alone. They soon used up all their resources and were forced to work, or to steal, or to starve. They could maintain neither their self-respect nor their physical or psychological well being. Although they were content with half a handful, they did not want to earn even that.

So what is the answer? It is quite simple. Learn to submit to the sovereign providence of God. Make your expectations realistic and potentially attainable with legitimate effort. Learn to realize that what matters is not how much you have but how much you enjoy what you have. The truth of verse 6, "Better one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind" is repeated in the New Testament Scriptures; "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6, NIV). True contentment grows out of true godliness. The emphasis in Scripture is

on our *being* something, and not on our *doing* something.

God has given me the privilege of traveling many places and meeting many different people. As I have traveled, two things have amazed me. First, some of the most contented and joyous people I have ever met have very little of this world's goods, and some of the most discontented were the most wealthy. Second, some of the poorest were the most greedy, grasping, and arrogant, and some of the wealthiest were the most generous, loving, and truly humble. Stuart Olyott, in his exposition of Ecclesiastes, presents a balanced approach to work and wealth.

Work undoubtedly brings some reward, but too much of it brings nothing but trouble. It is better to have modest earnings and a restful mind than to make huge gains, with their accompanying anxiety.

Who can count how many over-ambitious executives have learned the truth of these words, without ever reading them here? And who among us does not know a score of wives who look back with longing to the days when their now successful husbands had less responsibilities? Less anxieties and less money but more time to enjoy what really matters in life. Those were the days of an almost infinitely greater peace of mind, which stand in stark contrast to their present dissatisfied restlessness.⁵

The godliness of which Paul writes (1 Tim. 6:6) is essential for contentment in the workplace. A good friend of mine applied for a job selling insurance. The insurance company administered a psychological test that indicated that sales was the last profession my friend should pursue. Even though he had already been successful as a salesman in a small specialty company, the insurance company trusted the

test and did not hire him. A close friend finally secured him a job as a salesman with a company who did not require a psychological test. Within five years, he was sales manager of a regional office. Today he is vice president of the entire company. How could the insurance company's psychological test have been so wrong? Many of the questions in the test were designed to find someone whose chief goal was to make money and to get ahead. In other words, the company wanted someone who was willing to sell his or her soul for success and money, regardless of the consequences. A conscientious Christian whose chief goal is to glorify God would answer some of those questions quite differently from a person who wanted to get to the top as soon as possible. There are few large corporations where a child of God can follow his or her Christian conscience and at the same time "play ball by the corporate rules." Notice I did not say *none* but *few*.

We should adopt "Better one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind," not as a slogan, but as a consistent way of life.

To be continued.

¹ From "It is Well with My Soul" by Horatio G. Spafford (1828 – 1888).

² From "If We Could See Beyond Today" by Norman J. Clayton (1903 – 1992).

³ Michael A. Eaton, *Ecclesiastes, An Introduction & Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1983), 90.

⁴ Derek Kidner, *A Time To Mourn & A Time To Dance* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1976), 44.

⁵ Stuart Olyott, *A Life Worth Living* (Welwyn, England: Evangelical Press, 1983), 34.

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unregenerate sinners. The law of Moses was given to a physical nation composed mainly of unregenerate sinners, but the law of Christ is given to a spiritual nation of regenerate saints.

Jesus does not contradict Moses' law, any more than he contradicted Aaron's priesthood. He fulfilled it. Jesus brought both to their full and perfect completion, in a better covenant. A greater than Moses is here! God's final Word is Jesus (Heb. 1:1-3). Jesus has replaced Moses, the servant through whom God spoke partial and preparatory truth. Christ supersedes and replaces Moses as the true and final lawgiver in the same way that he supersedes and replaces Aaron as the true and final High Priest.²

"For the priesthood being changed of necessity there is also a change of the law." (Heb. 7:12)

"For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." (John 1:17)

God did reveal himself, his holy character, in the law, but he reveals himself most fully in Christ, who is the express image of his person! It is not the Old Covenant laws that are the final word in what is "good"; that final word is expressed in the manifestation of God's love and holiness in and through his beloved Son.

It is good for us to love one another because Christ first loved us (John 13:34-35). It is good for us to please our neighbor because "Christ did not please himself" (Rom. 15:2-3). It is good for us not to be self-centered because Christ made himself of no reputation and gave his life a ransom for many (Phil. 2:3-7). It is good for us to avoid illicit sexual relations because he purchased our bodies with his own blood (1 Cor. 6:18-20). It is good for us to

freely give of our material goods to those in need because Christ became poor, that we might become rich (2 Cor. 8:9). Our standard of holy living is the person and work of Jesus Christ!³

If, in response to the cross, we are not moved to change our way of life, all the commandments in the world will not produce holiness in us. If the love of Christ does not compel us, nothing will (2 Cor. 5:14). Christ has freed us and given us his Spirit so that we can walk in righteousness—not grudgingly, but from the heart. Therefore, his commandments are not burdensome (1 John 5:3).

Judaism made "law" their Christ, but Jesus Christ came to replace the "torah" – he is the superior revelation of the will of God. Thus, Christ and his gospel are the standard by which all behavior is measured. Moses commanded love for one's neighbor, but, as we have seen, Christ has taken this to its ultimate holy level. He did this by expanding the definition of neighbor to include even our enemies, and by exalting the definition of love to the way in which he loved us. We stand in awe of the Lord Jesus Christ who loved us, even when we were his enemies, even to the point of death on the cross. The one who loved us is none other than God's own dear beloved Son. Let us hear him (Matt. 17:1-6; Luke 9:28-36; Acts 3:13, 22-24; Matt. 28:18-20)!

Presented by Murray McLellan (an unworthy sinner upon whom the glorious sovereign of the universe has bestowed his mighty grace— "But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God – and righteousness and sanctification and redemption – that, as it is written, 'He who glories, let him glory in the Lord'" 1 Cor. 1:30-31). I do not claim to be,

nor seek to be original in the preceding article. I seek to magnify and exalt the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Unto Him belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

¹ For further insight into this topic see: Steve Lehrer, "I Hate You in Jesus' Name: How to Think About the War Psalms in the New Covenant Era," *The Journal of New Covenant Theology* 2:2 (summer 2004): 29-43.

² "Christ never contradicts Moses in the sense that Moses was in any way wrong. We believe in the unity of the Scriptures. Christ does, however, give the Church new and higher standards, or rules of conduct, than Moses ever gave, or could have given, under a covenant of law, but this in no way means or implies that Moses was wrong. It means that Christ is literally a new and superior Lawgiver than Moses because He administers a new and "better covenant based on better promises..." (Heb 8:6). It means that grace can make higher demands than law can make simply because of the nature and power of grace. Grace cannot only appeal to a higher motive and make higher demands, it can also *empower the fulfillment of those demands.*" John G. Reisinger, *But I Say Unto You*. (Southbridge, MA: Crowne Publications, 1989), 3. emphasis in the original.

³ This concept is worked out more fully in: Jon Zens, "This is My Beloved Son, Hear Him!" *The Foundation for New Covenant Ethics and Ecclesiology. Searching Together* 25 (Summer-Winter 1997): 2, 3, 4.

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Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Heb 4:14-16 ESV)

NEW COVENANT THEOLOGY REGIONAL SEMINARS

The faculty president of Providence Theological Institute (PTI), Gary D. Long, Th.D., will be conducting regional seminars starting in September.

Each seminar will entail up to 16 hours of instruction emphasizing the need for a New Covenant Theology (NCT) approach to interpreting the Scripture. There are a number of doctrines of grace pastors who believe that the middle walls of doctrinal partition that separate Covenant Theology from Dispensational Theology need to be broken down for the enhancement of the Gospel. NCT can help do this.

The seminars are designed specifically for pastors, teachers, interested individuals, and for prospective students interested in considering a seminary education.

Each seminar is planned to start on a given Thursday afternoon and end by noon on Saturday, including sessions on Thursday and Friday nights.

Interested church leaders who desire to host a NCT seminar should contact Dr. Long by e-mail at glongpti@hot.rr.com or by phone at (254) 933-2407. For more information on PTI, see its website at www.ptitx.org.