August 2009 Issue No. 8

Good News Unlimited

HOW TO BE RIGHT WITH GOD

Confessing your Sins

Will your Sins keep you Out of Heaven?

The Final Judgement Now!

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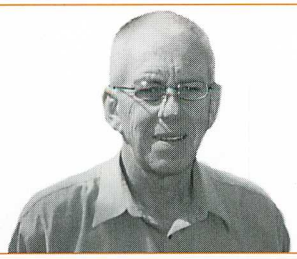

EDITORIAL

The Bible reveals that God demands justice from each one of us; he requires that each of us pay the full price for every false motive, wrong word and evil action.

None can escape his Judgement, in which we will be compelled to pay the total amount for the very least as well as the greatest of our sins. One day all our sins will be laid out before the Judge. The secret things that were done behind closed doors will be opened to the view of all. And the good things that we should have done, but didn't, will be paraded along with the bad things we should not have done, but did.

Is there any hope that we might escape that Judgement? I'm afraid not! There is no escape. Suicide offers no comfort, because the bullet that takes your life would shoot you straight into the Final Judgement. You must pay the full price for your sins—which is total rejection and abandonment by God. And when the Life-giver turns his back on you, that will be the end, because the opposite of the fullness of life with him is the total absence of life—annihilation (2 Thessalonians 1:9).

Did you know that there are millions of people in the world today who have already paid the full price for their sins? The Bible says: 'If one died for all, then all died' (2 Corinthians 5:14). Think about that verse for a while. It tells us that every single person has paid for their sins in Jesus. But few know about it, and even fewer have accepted it. God will not force his free gift of life on anyone. If people turn their backs on it he will respect their wishes.

The Judgement of our sins took place at the cross, and we who put our faith in Christ are acquitted, because, when Jesus died we died with him. When the Father turned his back on Christ, he turned his back on us also. So when 'we died with Christ' (Romans 6:8) our sins were fully atoned for; there was nothing left to pay. 'There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus' (Rom. 8:1).

Yes God required his full 'pound of flesh,' but he required it, not of us, but of himself. Justice demands that the one in the wrong pay up; grace, on the other hand, bears the penalty itself. Because God executed justice upon himself he is able to extend grace to us. He did this so that he could be both 'just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus' (Rom. 3:26). Justice required that our sin be paid for, and Jesus satisfied God's justice when he died the second death for us on the cross. If we accept, by faith, that we were in Jesus when he died on the cross, then our record is wiped clean; we are justified by God's grace. Our sins are completely blotted out and replaced by righteousness.

The Bible says: 'God made [Jesus] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God' (2 Cor. 5:21). I'm rather glad it doesn't say, 'In him we might become the righteousness of Paul the apostle,' or 'the righteousness of Mother Teresa.' Neither of these would qualify us for God's kingdom. But who could find fault with 'the righteousness of God'?

That is grace at its very best, grace which offers prostitutes and sinners who put their trust in Jesus, a righteousness that qualifies them for an eternal home with a gracious and loving God.

—**Ritchie Way**

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Mission Statement

Christians united in offering to all, meaning and direction in their lives by a knowledge of God's reconciliation with humanity through his Son, Jesus Christ.

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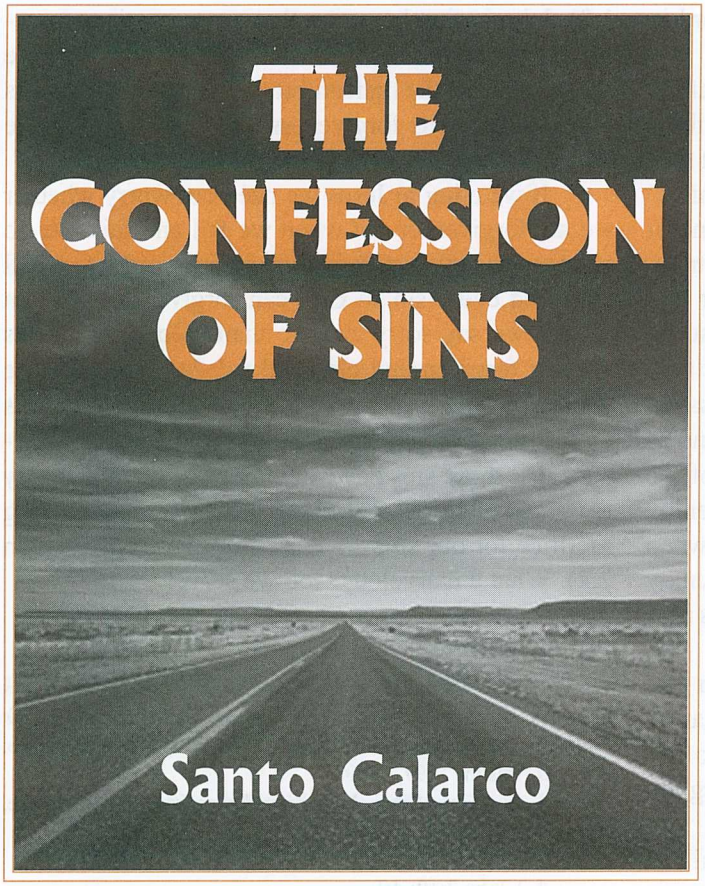

The Bible says, *'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness'* (1 John 1:9). Does this mean that we have to list and confess *every* known sin to God in order to be forgiven? Many Christians believe that to be the case. However, when we read this verse in context and take into consideration the historical background of this passage another meaning emerges altogether.

According to *Vines Dictionary of the Bible* the word 'confess' comes from the Greek word *homologeo* and its root meaning is 'to speak the same thing (*homos*, 'same', *lego*, 'to speak'), to assent, accord, agree with'.1 In other words we are to 'speak the same thing and agree with God' about our sins. This is different from listing every single sin, one by one, in order to receive God's forgiveness!

While the word 'confess' is found throughout the New Testament, for the sake of our study it is important to understand how the apostle John uses this word in his Gospel and letters, for that would help us understand what he means by this word in the verse under consideration.

So let's look at how John uses this word 'confess' in another context: In John 9:22 we read that the Jews had decided that anyone who 'acknowledged [confessed, *homologeo*] that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue.' Here the translators of the *New International Version* of the Bible used the English word 'acknowledge' for *homologeo*. That is to say, anyone who 'agreed with and acknowledged' that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. Based on this we can begin to see that the word 'confess' does not necessarily mean that the confessor must list out each individual sin. The word 'confess' relates more to the *acknowledgment* of certain truths.

It would be helpful at this point if we took into consideration the historical situation that John was addressing in 1 John 1:9. One of the major purposes of John's letter was to expose the false teachers who were deceiving his flock. He wrote, '*These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you.*'[2] John refers to these teachers as false prophets, liars and antichrists.[3] Although these false teachers were once in the church they were never really part of the church and had now left to spread their dangerous teachings elsewhere.[4]

The specific false teaching John was addressing was docetic Gnosticism. These false teachers taught that matter was evil and spirit was good. Therefore, since God is spirit and good, Jesus could not have had a physical body, for matter was evil. They reasoned that Jesus only took on the 'form' or 'appearance' of a human body, much like a phantom. In 2 John 7, John warns against this false belief: 'Many *deceivers*, who do not *acknowledge* Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.'

The false teachers would not 'confess' i.e. 'acknowledge' that Jesus had a real body. For John this belief undermined the truth about Jesus' birth as a human being. Furthermore, if Jesus didn't have a real body then he could not have shed his blood for us on the cross.

These Gnostic teachers also taught that while the flesh was sinful, the spirit was holy and could not sin. They taught that, through Jesus, we became spirit beings incapable of sin. Noted scholars, William Barclay and G.E. Ladd say, 'If we say we have no sin' and 'if we say we have not sinned' were the claims of the false teachers![5] John exposed this fatal teaching and said quite plainly that those who made such claims were liars; did not live in the truth; did not have the truth;

were self-deceived and did not have God's Word in them (see 1 John 1:6, 8, 10).

It is significant that John uses the word 'confess' in the setting of discussing the false beliefs of these Gnostic teachers. True Christians will confess that they are sinners, albeit forgiven sinners. The word 'confess' here does not mean to list out actions one by one. It simply means an admission and proclamation of a truth.

John portrays two sets of 'confessions' or 'acknowledgments'—those by the saved and those by the lost. The lost acknowledge and confess that they have no sin and so walk in 'darkness', while the saved acknowledge (confess) that they do have sins and as a result of this confession (acknowledgment) of the presence of sins in their lives they continue to enjoy forgiveness and cleansing. John is saying, 'Only when we acknowledge that we do have sins can we enjoy God's abiding forgiveness and cleansing.' This is all 1 John 1:9 is saying.

John is *not* calling Christians to list out their sins one by one individually before God so that they can be forgiven. Simply to acknowledge the presence of sin in our lives keeps us within the bounds of the forgiveness and cleansing already provided by God.

Does this mean then that we need not talk to God when we blow it? Of course not! It is healing to do so. But when we confess a particular sin it is not with the view of convincing God to create forgiveness and cleansing, for that has already been achieved by the blood of Jesus shed on the cross (See Heb. 9:26; 1:3). John is simply saying that as we continue to acknowledge that we have sins, we continue at the same time to walk in the light and so experience the benefits of the continuous forgiveness and cleansing that the blood of Jesus has already provided.

If we cling to Jesus we need not worry whether we are forgiven or not when we fall and fail. We do not need to rack our brains and souls in order to recall each and every sin so God can forgive them. When we sin we say sorry and we thank God that he has already forgiven and cleansed us! At the same time we seek his help and counsel to overcome. John tells us that when we sin as believers, we can have assurance that those sins have already been taken away by the cross of Christ. By being in Christ—the atoning sacrifice for our sins—we are fully forgiven (1 John 2:2). What a marvelous God we serve!

Endnotes:

1. W.E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger and William White, *Vine's complete expository dictionary of Old and New Testament words [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System,* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1996.
2. *The Holy Bible, New King James Version*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc.) 1982.
3. 1 John 4:1; 2:22; 2:18, 22; 4:3.
4. 1 John 2:19; 4:1.
5. William Barclay, *The Letters of John and Jude*, (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1960), p.15. G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 609, 614.

NEW SATURDAY SERVICE IN CANBERRA, ACT

The Belconnen Baptist Chursh in Canberra now conducts a Saturday service at 5.00pm. You are invited to attend this great and friendly service each Saturday. Refreshments are provided. The address is: Belconnen Baptist Church, Corner of Dallachy and MacAdam Streets, Page, 2614 Canberra, ACT.

Phone: 02 6254 6565 www.belconnenbaptist.org.au

Good News Unlimited

Saturday Bible School 9.30am

Morning tea will be provided.

Please bring your Bible

Further information contact Carolyn:

Phone 07 5524 5040,

email: carolyn@goodnewsunlimited.org.au

Bible study at the GNU office

2/54-60 Industry Dr., South Tweed Heads NSW

August 1 & 15, September 5 & 19

October: No meetings

Narellan, Sydney

Focus for Life

Christian Fellowship

Those living in or near Narellan are warmly invited to meet for Bible study and fellowship in the Salvation Army Worship Centre on the corner of Exchange Parade and Narellan Road in Narellan, every Saturday at 1:30pm. For further information, contact Pastor Santo Calarco on phone number: 0404 029822

We Need Your Help!

GNU MISSION TO THE UKRAINE

An appeal has come to *Good News Unlimited* for a pastor and his wife to visit the Ukraine in October to conduct revival and evangelistic meetings at gatherings of people in four locations there. These Ukrainian Christians, who have come out of many years in legalism, are hungry for the gospel of the Lord Jesus.

They have asked for Pastor Ritchie Way and his wife Rosemary to come after their harvest is over, when the people will be free to attend meetings during the daytime. For sixteen days Pastor Ritchie Way will run the public revival and evangelistic meetings in four localities and Rosemary will minister to the women.

The Ukrainian Christians will host them while there, but these dear people cannot afford the cost of airfares to and from the Ukraine.The return airfares for two people to the Ukraine, plus visas and travel insurance, is in excess of NZ $8000.00. That is the basic cost, which does not take into account other necessary expenses that will be incurred.

We are blessed by the fact some GNU groups in Canada have offered to make a contribution towards these costs. We believe that our supporters in Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere would also like to invest in this outreach for the Lord. We appeal to you, our readers, for your financial help. If the Lord lays it on your heart to have a part in winning people to the Lord Jesus Christ and blessing these people with the gospel of his grace, please send your donation for the 'UKRAINE MISSION' into either the Australian or New Zealand GNU Office. With your support we will be able to answer the call of the Ukrainians. Please help us to help them.

When Ritchie and Rosemary return they will give you a report and pictures of their four missions in the December GNU magazine.

We have just one further request, please pray for the health and protection of Ritchie and Rosemary while they are away and for God's blessing on their meetings; that they will leave a lasting legacy of God's grace with these dear people.

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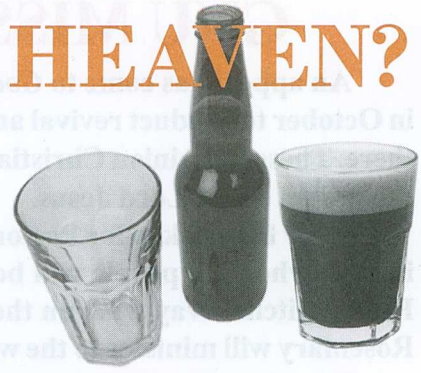
When the New Zealand government decided to refund the tax on all donations (up to the level of a person's income) which had been given to approved charitable organizations with donee status, it was decided to establish a New Zealand Branch of GNU, and apply for this charitable and donee status. After consideration we received registration, enabling us to issue receipts so that Inland Revenue would give donors one third of their donations back.

WILL YOUR BESETTING SINS KEEP YOU OUT OF HEAVEN?



Santo Calarco

I have been a Christian for over thirty years and sadly, most of that time I felt distant from God and longed for the joy and freedom Jesus and Paul spoke about. I lived with a sense of lingering condemnation and I knew what caused it; it was a continual awareness of the sins still in my life. The writings of Paul that I cherished so much became a source of discouragement for me. He spoke so clearly about acceptance with God on the one hand, and yet on the other, made some of the most frightening statements about the fate of sinners that I had ever read in the whole Bible.

According to Paul, sins that would exclude people from the kingdom include greed, envy, strife, deceit, gossip, slander, pride, disobedience to parents, heartlessness,[1] hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions[2]. To make it even worse, Paul puts these sins in the same category as adultery, the worship of other gods, sodomy and witchcraft.[3] Paul then states, quite categorically, that people who practise such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

We think that devil worship and witchcraft are the big sins. According to Paul, however, if you gossip or slander you are as guilty as the devil worshipper in God's eyes. This was not good news as far as I could see, because who of us is totally free of these sins? Who of us can claim that we are not committing any of these on a regular basis? Who then can be saved?

THE SOLUTION

There are millions of Christians all around the world who love the Lord Jesus supremely, but struggle with besetting sin in their lives, and passages like these[4] can be terrifying. In many cases they are taught that each time they sin they lose their fellowship with the Lord and so need to urgently confess and repent, because if they died in the interim, they would be lost.

If this is your experience read on, for I have the best news you may hear for a long time. Let's examine the most well-known of Paul's warning passages: 'Do you not know that **the unrighteous** *will not inherit the kingdom of God*? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such *were* some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God' (1 Cor. 6:9-11 NKJV).

At first glance it seems that Paul is speaking to believers about the possible fate of those Christians who commit the sins named by Paul. However, on closer inspection, we find that Paul is in fact talking to believers about the fate of *unbelievers*, 'the unrighteous'. Please note the way he contrasts the Corinthian believers with the lost 'unrighteous' in verses 9 and 11. In verse 11 he says that some of these believers 'were', at one time in the past, part of the lost, 'the unrighteous'. In other words, Paul in this passage refers to two different groups.

Note how Paul puts the whole world into two categories: '*the unrighteous*' or '*the world*', and '*the saints*' or '*you*'. 'Dare any of *you*, having a matter against another, go to law before *the unrighteous*, and not before *the saints*? Do you not know that *the saints will judge the world*? And if *the world* will be judged by *you*, are *you* unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?' (1 Cor. 6:1-3 NKJV).

But who then are '*the saints*'? This group clearly includes the believers at Corinth. Note the way Paul says '*the saints* will judge *the world*' and '*the world* will be judged by *you*.' This judgement takes place after the return of Jesus. Paul envisaged the church at Corinth as being among the saved when Jesus returns and being involved in judging lost humans and angels. Their eternal security is not in jeopardy.

We are, however, confronted with a paradox here. The believers at Corinth—called '*saints*'—were practising wilful, unrepentant sin even at the time Paul was

writing this letter to correct them. The problem there was that the saints were not behaving very saintly. It is important to see that although Paul plainly states that he strongly disapproves of this sinful ungodly behaviour, he still calls these sinning Corinthians '*saints*'—they are saved believers behaving in sinful ways.

So it seems that Paul is saying two things at the same time: he is distinguishing between the believer's sinless identity as '*saints*', and their sinful behaviour. 'You yourselves do wrong and cheat', he chided. This indicates that a Christian is not identified by what he does. Although these Corinthian believers were engaging in unrepentant cheating, Paul still recognised them as saints! '*Saints*' refers to their new identities in Christ, an identity that is based on what Christ did on the cross and not on what the saints themselves do.

The problem however was that their behaviour did not match their identity in Christ. In other words, their 'do' did not match their new 'who'—they were sinning saints. Paul calls them away from this behaviour to live in harmony with who they were in Christ. *All this means that a believer does not lose his position in Christ through sinful behaviour*. That, in itself, is great news! This distinction lays the foundation for what immediately follows in the rest of the chapter.

In verse 9 Paul again refers to the lost: 'Do you not know that *the unrighteous* will not inherit the kingdom'? To these sinning saints he speaks about the lost, 'the unrighteous' who will 'not inherit the kingdom.' They will not inherit the kingdom because they rejected the One who died to open the door for them to enter. The time will come when these sinful rejecters of Christ will be judged by the sinful acceptors of Christ. The fact of the matter is plain: both 'the unrighteous' and 'the saints' commit acts of sin. The righteous, however, have accepted the sin-bearer, Christ, while the unrighteous have rejected him.

In verse 11 Paul speaks about the believer's new identity as saints and he emphasises this by using the word 'were'; 'this is what some of you *were*'. He did not say 'that is what some of you used to do', but 'were'. Again he is not referring to behaviour but to identity. He goes onto say that because they had placed their faith in Jesus, they were now washed, justified [declared righteous] and sanctified [separated for God]—all past tense. Did you notice the way Paul says that these sinning, defrauding, cheating Christians 'were' (past tense) washed, justified and sanctified regardless of their current behaviour? This is nonsense to us humans but a reality in God's eyes. What good news!

In 1 Corinthians Paul is quite straightforward about the sinful behaviour of the Corinthian, saved saints. To a great extent their behaviour matches the behaviour actually listed in verses 9-11. They cheated and defrauded each other wilfully and without repentance (v. 8). These acts fit into the category of 'extortioners' that Paul mentions in verse 10. In the next chapter, Paul talks about adultery, and it is evident from his instructions that some of the Corinthian believers were having trouble in this area.

Some of these same Corinthian believers were getting drunk at the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:21) which would put them in the 'drunkards' category of verse 10. The division in the church that Paul dealt with in the first four chapters would put many of the believers into the class of 'slanderers.'

Paul even goes on to speak about the sexual immorality of some of the Corinthian saints: Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! (1 Cor. 6:15 NIV).

Here Paul says that when a believer slept with a prostitute they were including Jesus in that repugnant act. But he did not say that they would sever themselves from Jesus by that act. He did not say that Jesus waited outside the door when they did this. He did not say they were lost if they did this. No, but in their repulsive act they were uniting the members of Christ with a prostitute.

This then forms the basis for Paul's appeal in calling the saints from sexual immorality. In verse 18-20 Paul says, 'flee sexual immorality ... you were bought at a price, therefore honour God with your body'.

DOES BEHAVIOUR MATTER?

Behaviour does matter, but we need to be reminded continually that we are saved not by our behaviour, but by Christ's (Rom. 5:19). As long as we put our trust in Christ and stand with him, we are on the winning side. So if the saints will not be lost for sinful behaviour, what purpose does the warning about the behaviour of the unrighteous serve? Sin matters to God, because it is the opposite of what God is and has terrible consequences. And in view of the fact of what God has done for us in Christ, we, as believers, are admonished to live in harmony with our new identities in the power of the Spirit. God takes behaviour seriously. In effect Paul is saying 'If only you realised who you are in Christ your behaviour would change!' Nonetheless, the good news remains, as long as you cling to Christ your besetting sins won't keep you out of heaven.

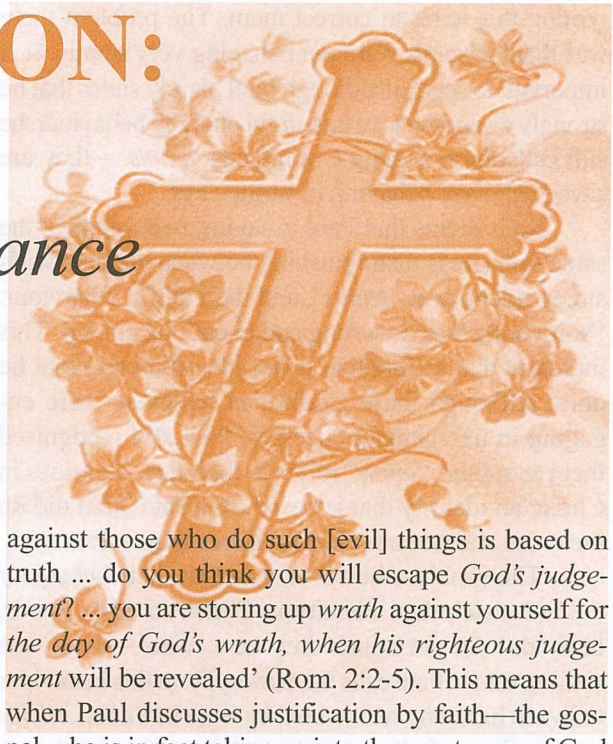
Endnotes:

1. Romans 1:28-31
2. Galatians 5:19-22
3. Galatians 5: 19-22
4. 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal 5:19-22; Eph. 5:3-7; Col. 3:5-6. I have written a more extensive paper that deals with all these passages if you would like a copy write to me at email address rocsan7@bigpond.com

JUSTIFICATION:

The Final Judgement in Advance

Santo Calarco



The New Testament tells us that all Christians will come before the judgement seat of God (Rom. 14:11-12; 2 Cor. 5:10). Would you like to know how you will fare when your name comes up in that final judgement? The Bible reveals that you can know the verdict God will pronounce upon you ahead of time.

Many Christians don't realise, that when they are 'justified by faith in Jesus', they already have the final verdict of the judgement in advance! If they have been 'justified' then they have been 'declared righteous' for that is what the word means. Most of us know this already but what many don't realise is the legal background in the mind of Paul when he used this word.

The word 'justify' was a common word in Paul's day that was used in courts of law. If you went to court and the judge found you to be innocent, in the right, or not guilty, then he would declare you to be 'justified.' The word 'justify' is linked with judgement.

JUSTIFICATION IS A FORENSIC TERM AND RELATES TO THE END-TIME

It is significant to note that as soon as Paul defines the gospel as 'righteousness [justification] by faith' that he links it to the wrath of God (Rom. 5:9). The first word in Romans 1:18 is 'for' [although omitted by the *New International Version* it is in the Greek text and appears in the *New American Standard Bible* and *New King James Version*]: 'For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness'. By using the word 'for' between verses 17 and 18 we see a cause and effect relationship between righteousness (justification) by faith, the gospel and God's wrath.

In Romans chapter 2 Paul goes onto to tell us that the day of God's wrath is the same as the day of God's *judgement*: 'Now we know that *God's judgement* against those who do such [evil] things is based on truth ... do you think you will escape *God's judgement*? ... you are storing up *wrath* against yourself for *the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgement* will be revealed' (Rom. 2:2-5). This means that when Paul discusses justification by faith—the gospel—he is in fact taking us into the courtroom of God to receive the verdict that will be proclaimed upon us at the end of time! Everything will depend upon who carries our sins, us or Jesus. If we are still carrying our sins, we will be condemned for them; but if we have given our sins to Jesus, then he was condemned for them. All who have given their sins to Jesus will be justified by faith in him.

We learn from Paul that the gospel—justification by faith—involves a declaration by God in final judgement that will justify his people and declare them 'Not guilty'. God's people are judged ahead of time—the moment they accept the judgement of Jesus on the cross for their sins. There, on the cross, Jesus endured the wrath of God in our place. When Christ, as your representative, died for your sins, you also died for your sins (2 Cor. 5:14). You paid for the price of your sins in him. The moment you accept that reality, you are justified—declared not guilty—by faith in him.

Paul teaches that 'by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in his [God's] sight' (Rom. 3:20). This means that any attempt to justify ourselves by keeping the law is futile. But then comes the good news of Paul's gospel: since man can never meet the strict demands of God's law, God himself, in Jesus Christ, fulfilled those demands and offered his righteousness to man through his sacrifice on the cross. 'But now God has shown us a different way of being right in his sight—not by obeying the law' (Rom. 3:21 NLT). God took his end-time wrath that we deserved and placed it on Jesus! There on the cross he endured the wrath of God in our place (1 Thes. 1:10). And so now we, 'by faith in his blood' (Rom.

3:25), may receive the verdict of the final judgement in advance!

Herein is the good news! God declares me justified because I place my faith in the blood of Jesus. For me, justification—which primarily means acquittal at the final judgement—has already taken place in the present. The end-time judgement broke into history at the Cross. For you and me, who put our faith in Jesus, the future judgement has already taken place. This is why Paul can say that there is therefore '*now no condemnation* for those who are in Christ Jesus' (Rom. 8:1).

I need not fear the final judgement, for I know even now, what the verdict will be: 'Not condemned!' How can I know this? I can know it because God took the condemnation that we deserved and placed it on Jesus (2 Cor. 5:21). 'For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did *by sending his own Son* in the likeness of sinful man *to be a sin offering*. (Rom. 8:3).

Dedication of Twins in New Zealand

Dr Fraser Burling and his wife, Kylie, are the treasurers for Good News Unlimited in New Zealand. Their loving commitment to Good News Unlimited will not be fully known until the Lord comes.

The Burlings were recently delighted to double the size of their family with the birth of twin boys, Walter Lennard and Caspian David.

Pastor Ritchie Way and the Reverent Doug Lendrum dedicated the twins to the Lord at a service in the same church where Kylie's grandparents were married exactly seventy-three years ago to the hour and day.

Good News Unlimited wishes them every blessing as the family grows in grace together.

—Ritchie Way

STANDING IN THE NEED OF PRAYER

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TOPSI-TURVI HORMONES

What cats know and people need to know.

(The second of three parts)

Gillian Ford

HIS AND HER HORMONES

'Why are we so different when we are brother and sister?' asked my cat, Turvi.

'Everyone is different,' replied Topsi, 'but one important factor is that you are a boy and I am a girl. For instance, boys have lower levels of **leptin** than girls.' She continued, 'Boys and girls have different sex hormones. You have lots of **testosterone** and a little bit of **estrogen** and I have lots of estrogen and a little bit of testosterone. Testosterone lowers your leptin level and estrogen raises mine.'

'What is testosterone?' asked Turvi.

'It's the male hormone,' said Topsi, 'having high levels of testosterone is why men are generally more interested in sex and violence. They perform most of the violent crime. Testosterone makes men love fights; they love rough sports, they love war movies. You know those two wild cats that live outside and love to chase us. You ignore the girl, but you always growl at the boy.

Testosterone makes men more competitive.' Topsi continued, 'On the other hand, I have lots of estrogen. It makes me into a girl, it makes me cute and it makes me love to shop. But it also makes me tend to put on weight. It also improves my mood and brings me into heat so boys get interested in me. I tend to get crabby when my estrogen drops. Humans call it PMS.'

STRADDLIN' 'N' PADDLIN'

'Only,' Topsi said sadly, 'they stopped us having babies, so our hormones don't work as well as they normally would.' She looked sad, 'I would have liked kittens, but it wasn't meant to be.'

'Why did they do that?' asked Turvi. He was curious, because every so often he would grab the back of Topsi's neck in his mouth and just paddle away on her back with his paws. It really irritated Topsi and she would bite him. But that's all he did because he'd been neutered. He never followed through. He didn't know why he did it. It was just instincts about sex and the remnants of testosterone.

'They did surgery on us both when we were about five months old,' said Topsi. 'They took my baby basket out and they tied knots in your tiddler. They say there are too many cats and this is the only way to stop cats from ruling the world.'

Turvi said, 'Never mind, Topsi. We still rule in this house.'

SUN BUG OR DARK SLUG

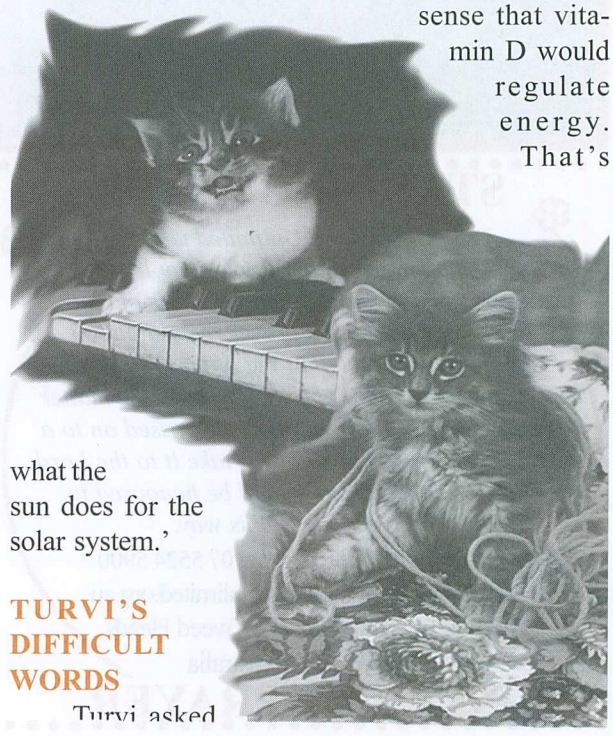
The next day, Topsi and Turvi were lying out on the deck in the morning sun.

'I love the sun,' said Turvi, 'it's so warm it makes you relax and feel good inside.'

'That's because it helps give you energy,' replied Topsi. Topsi was more of an indoor cat, but Turvi was often out all day.

'The sun's rays go through the skin and change cholesterol into **vitamin D**,' added Topsi, 'it goes through several changes and, finally, it becomes a steroid or a hormone—just like thyroid or estrogen.' She continued, 'Vitamin D has always been connected with bones, because children and animals who are kept inside and don't see the sun get bowed legs. It's called rickets.

But there's more to vitamin D than that. There are receptors for vitamin D, called VDR all through the immune system and the hormone system. Vitamin 25,D, which is an early form of this vitamin is very important. It is a universal energy regulator in the body. It controls the central balance of your minerals, especially calcium and phosphate, and controls your metabolism. It makes sense that vitamin D would regulate energy. That's what the sun does for the solar system.'



TURVI'S DIFFICULT WORDS

Turvi asked

what a mineral was, what was metabolism and what was a receptor, for goodness sake?

'Let's start with the receptor,' said Topsi. 'A receptor is a little thingy on a cell. A hormone comes along in the bloodstream and it attaches itself to a receptor, like a plug in a hole. The receptor is like a radio transmitter. The hormone molecule fits into the receptor and enables it to pass chemical information into the nucleus of the cell. Hormones have special roles; they are like schoolteachers and janitors in your cells. There are 'gates' on your cells that are like sentries, allowing good nutrients to come into the cell, but stopping bad substances like chemicals and viruses. But hormones are so important, that they don't have to pass by the sentries. They run everything, so they have to have direct access to your cells through their special receptor. Having a receptor is like having a special password.

Different hormones have different receptors. The receptors are very fussy; they want the perfect match in hormones. Sometimes they accept second best, but it can cause problems. Hormones that don't match perfectly won't work as well. In fact, they can block the receptor. An example is, if they were to use human estrogen in us, it wouldn't work as well because we have different types of estrogens. In humans, it doesn't work as well to give them horse estrogens.

One of the big problems, these days, is chemical pollution that acts like estrogens (plastics and pesticides, for example). Those estrogens are called xenoestrogens—or foreign estrogens. They can occupy the receptors for estrogen in your body and they are being linked to lots of cancers. They are making lots of changes in animals and humans. Why, I heard today on the BBC news that there are increasing numbers of hermaphrodite polar bears near the Arctic Circle. They are getting too much chemical exposure from European industrial waste products in the sea. So now there are he, she, and it bears.'

'We are 'it' cats,' said Turvi, 'but it was done to use by surgery and not by bad chemicals.'

GOT MINERALS?

'Minerals come from the ground and from the food we eat,' said Topsi, 'they are signals in the body which regulate body processes. Calcium and phosphate are two very important minerals because they are energy switches. Calcium switches energy on. Phosphate switches energy off. The breaking down of phosphate in the cells produces energy. Vitamin 25,D balances calcium and phosphate, and that balance is crucial. If it is off, all your hormones will be out of balance. Vitamin 25,D also regulates and is regulated by **parathyroid** hormone (PTH), which controls mineral balance in the bones. Usually you have 4 parathyroid glands located behind the thyroid.

Another hormone **calcitonin** is produced by the thyroid and in other places. Its job is to regulate calcium from the diet in the intestine. Parathyroid switches calcium on. Calcitonin switches calcium off. All the minerals (sodium, magnesium potassium, zinc, etc) are important. But calcium and phosphate are key in energy metabolism. Just a note, Turvi, when you use hormones like vitamin D and thyroid medication as treatment, you have to remember there is the possibility of side effects. You are altering the body's chemistry at a very central level. Sometimes the body doesn't like it.'

METABOLISM: THE PROCESS OF ENERGY

'Metabolism means the process of energy,' continued Topsi. 'You know how when Gill opens the door, you fly out instead of walking slowly like me? You have a lot more energy than I do, even though you eat less. We were born different. Not everyone has the same amount of energy. Whenever you think of hormones you ought to think of energy, because that's what they are all about. The whole body is about energy. You acquire energy, you store it or you use it up. Energy metabolism is how the body burns power to create energy and run all the body's processes. The burning of energy is complex and involves many systems and chemicals. The endocrine system, the nervous system and mineral metabolism, work together to control this process. Mineral metabolism is how your body stores minerals to use as signals in the energy process.'

DEM BONES, DEM BONES, DEM DRY BONES'

'You may not know this', said Topsi, 'but how you use energy is reflected in your bone density. You probably have lower bone density than I do. If you use energy more than store it, you will tend to have lower bone density and weaker bones. If you store energy more than you use it, you will tend to have stronger bones.'

'I didn't know that,' said Turvi. 'Bones tell you a lot, don't they?'

'They really do,' replied Topsi, 'your bone density draws a picture of the overall health of your hormones and your metabolism. Bones that are weak are not good, because they can break easily. Bones that are too strong are not normal either. They can hurt a lot—it feels like muscle pain. Strong bones sometime splinter too. There is a fracture risk both ends. The main point,' she continued, 'is that when your bone density is abnormal, your mineral balance is also abnormal and that means your energy metabolism is out of kilter. Bone density testing is a great way to see if your metabolism is normal, as well as finding out what your risk of bone fracture is.'

'I can see,' said Turvi, 'that the centering of calcium and phosphate balance by vitamin 25,D and parathyroid hormone (PTH) in your bones is very important.'

'That's right,' said Topsi. 'Yes, it's central and the rest of the hormone structure is probably built upon it.'

OTHER 'GIRL' HORMONES

Turvi asked, 'Do we have any other hormones that are different?'

Topsi replied, 'We all have the same hormones but in different amounts. Girls also have more **progesterone**. They only have significant levels after they ovulate and when they are pregnant (can't speak for cats, but it's true in humans). It goes up high at ovulation and drops before they get a period. Then they don't have any progesterone to speak of in the first half of the cycle. During pregnancy, it's three hundred times higher than after ovulation. We have that extra hormone because it helps us get pregnant. But it's very low after menopause (which humans get but critters don't, except for surgery).

Some people think that progesterone is more important than estrogen. But women seem to feel better before ovulation when estrogen is very high and progesterone is absent. Estrogen is a natural antidepressant for many women, but no one reacts the same way to specific hormones. Some women feel awful on estrogen. There is a subgroup of women who feel wonderful on progesterone,' said Topsi, 'but there are probably more who find it makes them depressed, even the good stuff we call natural progesterone.'

'Are there any other hormones that girls have more of?' asked Turvi.

'Yes,' replied Topsi. 'We also have more **prolactin**, which makes us give milk when we have babies. Men have it too but not as much as us. Prolactin means 'for milk,' which is a bit confusing since it does lots of other things—like every hormone. Every hormone has a name that describes one thing it does, but in reality they all have hundreds of different functions. Each works throughout the body in different systems and different types of cells, and each works differently at different sites. We only know a little bit about what each hormone really does. That's what makes us so complicated.'

OTHER 'BOY' HORMONES

'Do I have other male hormones?' asked Turvi.

'Yes, you do," replied Topsi. 'Remember both girls and boys have all the hormones except some of the pregnancy ones. But men have a bit more **DHEA** (it's a long name for a hormone produced by the adrenal glands) and **androstenedione** (another adrenal gland hormone). It's hard to say, but say it 'andro' then 'steen' then 'die' then 'own'. They also tend to have more **angiotensin II**.'

'What is *that*?' asked Turvi. He had to hear it several times slowly to be able to say an-gio-ten-sin.

'It's a more masculine hormone opposite to prolactin,' replied Topsi, 'they regulate and feed back on each other. Angiotensin II is produced in the liver, and it particularly targets the kidneys, blood vessels, and the heart. High angiotensin II is associated with higher blood pressure and it can lead to bone being laid down in the wrong place (calcium plaque in the arteries is bone in the wrong place). Angiotensin II tends to run higher in men, and that's a reason they tend to have more heart disease. But some women have high angiotensin II also.'

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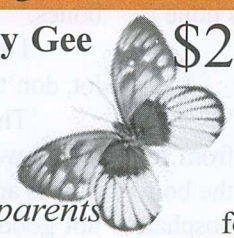

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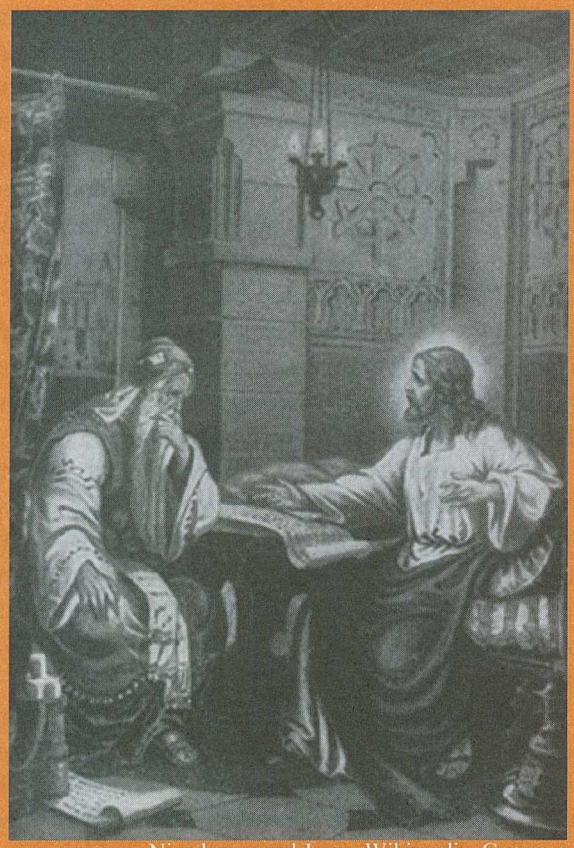
DID YOU KNOW?

The Pharisees

The Pharisees were primarily teachers of the law and not priests. While the Gospels refer to 'scribes and Pharisees,' it seems that the scribes were a particular branch of the Pharisees which dated back to the time of Ezra.

They were the ones who wrote out the Scriptures by hand. Initially, they regarded themselves as the preservers and protectors of the Word of God, but by the Second Century before Jesus they had become interpreters of the Scriptures also.



—Nicodemus and Jesus, Wikimedia Commons

The Pharisees, who wore a distinctive garb, or uniform, were found throughout Israel. They accepted the books of the prophets as authoritative Scripture along with the Law of Moses, although most of them weren't prepared to accept the Writings, which were a group of books such as Esther, Psalms, Proverbs and Daniel. They also accepted the authority of oral tradition, which later became the *Mishnah*, but were criticised by Jesus for putting their 'own traditions' ahead of 'the commands of God' (Mark 7:8-9). Jesus also attacked them for their works/righteousness (Matt. 5:20), their pride against others (Matt. 9:10-13), their hypocrisy (Luke 11:37-41); their inverted values (Luke 11:42) and their covetousness (Luke 16:14-15).

It will surprise some to note that the Pharisees were the ones who introduced baptism for new converts, a practice that was continued by John the Baptist and Jesus. They must also be given the credit for highlighting the biblical teachings about the Messiah and the resurrection from the dead.

By the time of Jesus, the Pharisees had split into liberal and conservative camps. The school headed by Hillel, took a lenient view about enforcing the Law. Gamaliel, who counselled the Sanhedrin to consider carefully how they should treat the apostles, belonged to this school.

The other Pharisaic school—the ultra-conservative branch—was headed by Shammai, who was extremely intolerant of dissidents, Gentiles and the Roman government. His party, with the help of anti-Roman factions which did not hesitate to use violence, gained control of the Sanhedrin in Jesus' time, which may explain their fierce opposition to Jesus and his more 'Hillel-type' teachings.

Both Nicodemus (John 3:1) and Paul (Acts 26:5; Philp. 3:5) were Pharisees, and over a period of time a number of Pharisees became Christians (Acts 6:7; 15:5).

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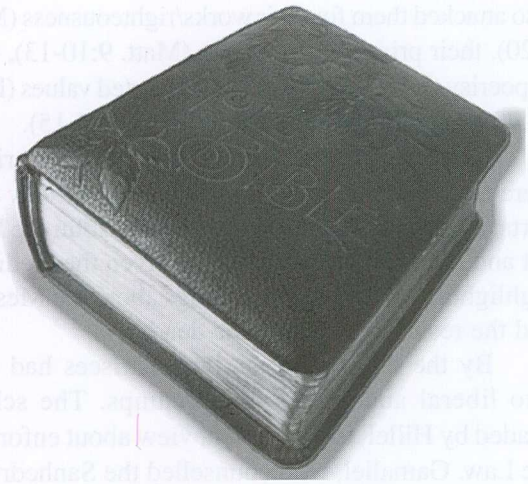
THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Part 8

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand



Ritchie Way

No other miracle was done so publicly or before so many witnesses, than when Jesus fed in excess of ten thousand people[1] with five barley loaves and two small fishes on a hillside beside the Sea of Galilee.[2]

Many Jews were on their way through Galilee to the Passover in Jerusalem when they were excitedly told about the new prophet, Jesus of Nazareth, who had been healing the sick (Luke 24:19). The word spread rapidly that Jesus and his disciples had gone across the lake to the far side, so the crowd followed on foot around the western side of the lake.

When Jesus saw thousands of people approaching he asked Philip, whose home was nearby, 'Where are we going to get enough food to feed all these people?' Jesus asked this to test Philip. Did Philip have enough faith to believe that the One who healed the sick could also feed the multitude? When Philip exclaimed, 'Eight months wages[3] wouldn't be enough to give each one a bite,' he got an F.

Then Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, 'Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish.' Andrew had faith in Jesus, even though it was only as small as a mustard seed. If only he had then kept his mouth shut, instead of next blurting out his doubts about Jesus' ability to feed such a great multitude, 'But how far will they go among so many?'

Jesus turned to his disciples and said to them, 'Make the people sit down.' So the disciples sat them down in groups of fifties. Jesus then took the bread[4] and fish (Mark 6:41-43), gave thanks, and distributed them to his disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people (Matt. 14:19). Like the widow's oil (2 Kings 4:1-6) the food kept coming until all the people were full. After everyone had eaten Jesus bade his disciples to gather up the leftovers so that nothing was wasted. What they collected filled twelve baskets.

To the people, Jesus was a Prophet like Moses, (John 6:14) taking his people to the Promised Land and feeding them on the journey with heavenly manna. Nobody got too much; nobody got too little.

This surely was the promised Messiah, the one who would drive out the hated Romans and restore independence to Israel. With him leading the army nothing would be impossible—he could heal the injured, raise the dead, and feed the troops. But 'Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew' (John 6:15).

Jesus was quite capable of doing what the people believed he could do, but having done all that, the hearts of the citizens of Israel would still be the same; people would still be selfish, evil and corrupt.

By contrast, the kingdom Jesus would reign over would consist of citizens who had accepted the Good News and been changed in their hearts through the indwelling the Holy Spirit (Heb. 8:10-12). Just as Jesus was able to feed the multitude with temporal food, so he was capable of feeding the spiritually hungry with the food that gives eternal life.

There are several lessons we can learn from this event:

1. This vast assembly of people was fed with a small boy's lunch. That lad was probably the most insignificant person there that day, but Jesus' blessing on his very common gift turned it into in a feast for thousands. Do you feel insignificant? Do you think

that your spiritual gift is not very special? In Jesus' hands your common gift can be the source of life for a multitude. The most important thing you can do is get your gift into Jesus' hands.

2. It is the duty of pastors and spiritual leaders to be Andrews. Their job is to look for potential in people. Frequently they will find it in people who are 'nobodies' rather than 'somebodies'. Having discovered it, their task is to introduce these people to Jesus. Jesus is able to take that person's 'lunch' and produce a feast from it.

3. Jesus did not feed the people himself. Instead he ordered his disciples to divide the people into groups of fifty and one hundred—ideal sizes for congregations. The disciples received the supernatural gospel from Jesus and it was their job to feed these people with it.

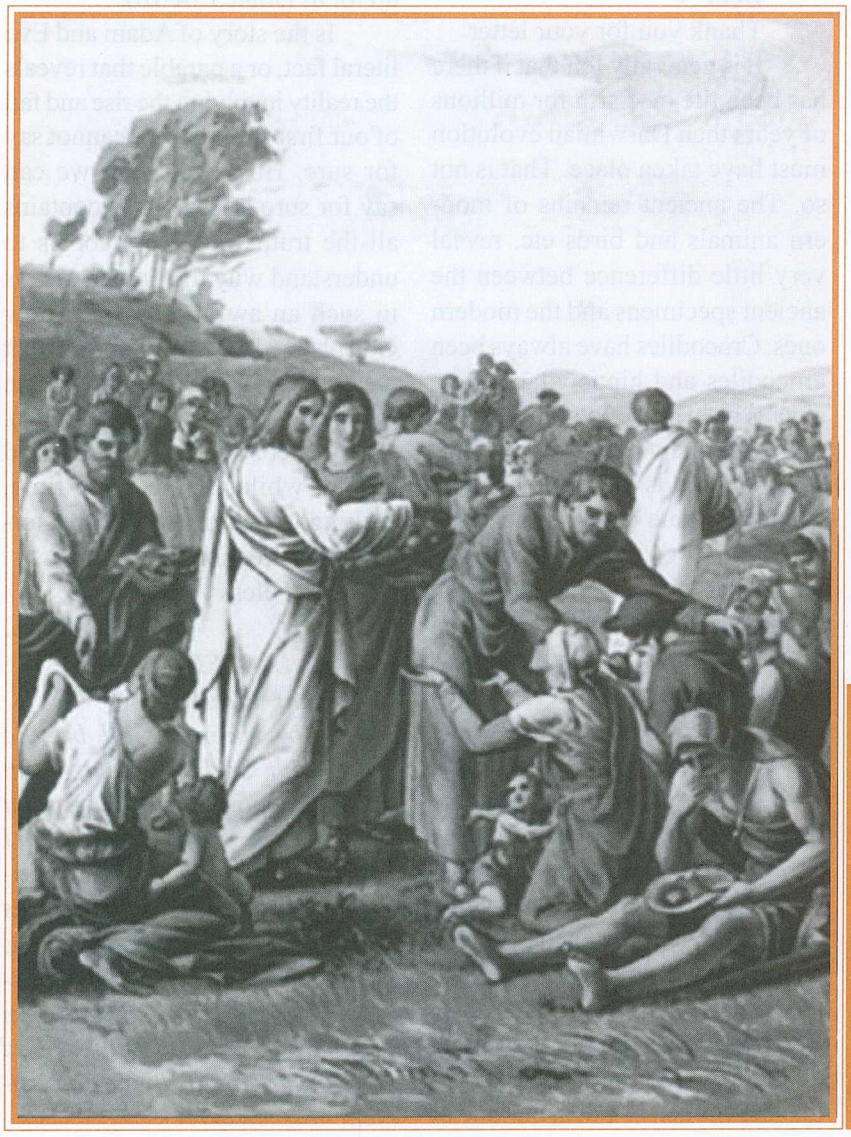
4. The 'food' Jesus handed to his disciples was more than sufficient for the needs of the people; nobody went away from that place hungry. Like the manna in the desert, there was sufficient bread of life for everyone.

5. Those who take the gospel to others, will, themselves, be amply rewarded. After the people had eaten, the disciples gathered up the food that was left over. There were twelve baskets full, enough for each disciple to have a basket of food.

The primary business of Jesus' disciples today is to find gifted people and introduce them to the Master. It is then their responsibility to ensure that these multiplied gifts are used to feed God's people. Not until the gospel has been taken to the whole world will we be discharged from that duty (Matt. 24:14).

Another key lesson from this story is that the spiritual food we give the people must come from the hands of Jesus; not from the creeds of Christendom; not from the traditions of the church; not from great theologians, evangelists or miracle workers; but directly from Jesus himself.

Scholars are taught to always go to the original source for their material, and Jesus is our original source. Food from Jesus' hands is food that gives eternal life, and there is more than enough for everyone from that source.



Endnotes:

1. In the custom of those times only men were counted, so the addition of women and children would greatly inflate the number given in the Gospel (Matt. 14:21).

2. Unlike the other Gospel writers, John calls the lake, the Sea of Tiberius. The reason for this is the Sea of Galilee was re-named after Tiberius Caesar, which was after the three other Gospels had been written, but before John's Gospel was written.

3. Eight months wages would have given each person a meal worth less than $4-00 in today's terms.

4. The five loaves would not have been very big, because they, together with the two small fish, made up just one meal for a small boy.

Overseas Readers

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Discussion Forum

GNU is a meeting of minds from a wide range of church affiliations and therefore, opinions expressed in our articles may differ from that of many of our readers. Recognising that opinions can differ and we all have much to learn and unlearn, we encourage our readers to participate in this forum.

AGE OF THE EARTH

Dear Pastor Way

I have read some of your articles on the GNU site. One, which made me think a lot, was about the age of Earth. It's great that you are trying to reach young people who are taught evolution and other things in colleges and universities. But your thesis about an 'old' Earth is creating more questions in my head as a believer, than it probably provides answers to the questions in the heads of those students.

I can accept that the age of Earth is not six thousand or even ten thousand, but maybe twenty thousand or more years, but if we start thinking about age in millions of years that makes me ask the following questions:

Were all living creatures, and especially humans, created as direct act of God? Did the human race start with just the original couple—Adam and Eve—or were there more than that? Was the Fall an historical fact, or just a parable?

In my opinion, the way we answer those questions will have a direct influence on the validity of the gospel. The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Romans, referred to the Fall through Adam and our salvation through Jesus. If we completely 'revise' our view of our origins, then we will have no other choice but to 'revise' the validity of the Gospel, life, death and resurrection of Jesus also.

Could you answer these questions of mine? Your article created a little 'earthquake' in my head.

May God bless you

V.S.

Dear V

Thank you for your letter

It is generally felt that if there has been life on Earth for millions of years then Darwinian evolution must have taken place. That is not so. The ancient remains of modern animals and birds etc. reveal very little difference between the ancient specimens and the modern ones. Crocodiles have always been crocodiles and hippopotami have always been hippopotami, etc. One of the best-kept secrets of Darwinian evolution is the complete lack of intermediate types in the fossil record. Even archaeopteryx, which has, for many years, been upheld as an example of evolution between dinosaurs and birds, was quietly retired from that role when it was discovered to be nothing more than an ancient bird.

The evidence suggests that there have been *several creation events* throughout Earth's history, the most recent of which was the creation of homo-sapiens (human beings). It was into man alone that God breathed his Spirit (Gen. 2:7). When man became the first living temple for God's Spirit, God put him into the Garden of Eden, the land of eternal life (Gen. 2:8). But the story reveals that man rejected God's Spirit as his Lord, in favour of Satan. When the Spirit departed from man, man became naked of the Shekinah glory that had covered him and was expelled from God's presence, because he was no longer a union of the human and the divine.

And because Adam no longer had the Spirit he was unable to pass the Spirit onto his offspring. Original sin is not what Adam gave us; it was what he was not able to give us because he did not have the Holy Spirit to give. Which is why we have to be born again of the Spirit if we wish to enter God's kingdom (John 3:3-7). And the new birth takes place when we look, with eyes of faith, upon the One who was lifted up for us (John 3:14-18).

Is the story of Adam and Eve literal fact, or a parable that reveals the reality involving the rise and fall of our first parents? We cannot say for sure. However, what we can say for sure is, that story contains all the truths necessary for us to understand why the human race is in such an awful mess, and how God planned to redeem us from that mess through the sacrifice of an innocent creature (see Gen. 3:21).

So let's keep our faith in God strong, while, at the same time, seeking to understand the mysteries of his creation.

God bless you

Ritchie.

JOB AND STEPHEN

Dear Ritchie

Job, when tested by the Devil with God's consent, is an interesting study. The main point that I have noted—one that I have never ever heard mentioned—is that when Job had his 'troubles' he automatically knew, or assumed, that God was involved, though the assumption that he had done something bad which warranted divine punishment was incorrect.

Today, when a Christian gets ill or has financial difficulties, he/she would likely assume that the problem is due to mere chance in the big, bad, mad world. People in Job's world didn't. They had the classic thinking pattern of: 'I am being punished by God because I have done something wrong.'

Again, we today would moan and gripe about 'fate' or 'bad luck', but we generally would not assume: 'Be good and God will bless you; be bad and God won't,' which is classic Old Testament thinking. But has God changed with the times? I doubt it. In fact, as I recall, the Bible states that God is no respecter of persons and also, that he is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.

For Job, everything was automatically linked to his relationship with God. He was sick, he had lost all his investments, so, 'Why Lord? What have I done?' And later, when Job passed the test, he was actually rewarded with health and wealth, so, from one point of view at least, his thinking was absolutely correct—back then at least.

I have a confession to make. I am currently helping in a business and the family who owns the business has for some reason assumed that I am doing it out of the goodness of my heart and are not paying me. I don't know how I get myself into these pathetic situations but I sometimes do. I thought, 'Okay, they are using me so I'll pay myself a modest hourly rate as I am running the show.' So I did ... until my conscience kicked in. At that point I decided that I would repay everything that I had paid myself and began doing so today. Tomorrow I'll have all the money paid back.

Now tonight when I came home, I signed onto the Internet. While I was actually on-line a music royalty payment e-mail popped into my In-Box. Yes, it happened on the very day I began to repay my 'conscience money.' If you know anything about music royalties, the chances of this occurring are incalculably low. It happened an hour ago. Is it a mere coincidence? Is it mere chance? Or is it a little pat on the back from God? I can't really know the answer to this but I hope it is the latter.

S.G.

Hi S

I doubt that we'll ever get to the bottom of your poser because God is much more complex that 2 + 3 = 5. He did say, however, 'Give and it shall be given unto you.' That is a matter of faith, but how God gives and when he gives, is always up to him.

I recall taking Rosemary on a holiday, which was beyond our budget, but it was her fortieth birthday so I wanted to do something nice for her. On the way we stopped off to see a dear friend who was dying of cancer. While there, an acquaintance, whom I had met only twice before, called in and gave us a cheque for $1000-00. We were blown away, but shouldn't have been because God is faithful.

And there are countless other stories like that. The unbeliever would call them coincidences. I say coincidences are God's servants.

Why your music royalties arrived at that precise moment we cannot know for sure (though we have a sneaking suspicion), but is a great occasion to thank God.

God bless you S

Ritchie.

GENESIS ONE AND CREATION

Good Morning

I have just read your article concerning the age of the earth and can't help but feel that you are allowing yourself to be misled, as there are biblical answers to these mysteries. A devoted Christian geologist, John Mackay, has devoted his life, as a Christian, to providing valid answers to these mysteries and spread that good news to the world.

After spending some time with John you would realise that the six-day creation, young earth and worldwide Flood are not just fairy tales but realities set in stone. In an age where man has declared himself smarter than God, a voice of truth is what the world needs; after all, declaring some of the Bible true and other areas false will only falsify the whole document, making it fit only for the trashcan.

Regards

D. J.

Hi D

The Bible is written in a number of different genres, among them prose, poetry, and apocalyptic. You wouldn't think much of my judgement if I rejected the Bible because it depicts a young lover as 'leaping across the mountains, bounding over the hills' (Song. 2:8). Nor would you be impressed if I threw out the Bible because it pictures an animal that is a composite of leopard, bear and lion, sitting on a throne (Rev. 13:2). None of these things is literal, but the message that each conveys is true. It is the same with Genesis 1.

Genesis 1 was written for people who believed the earth floated on a great ocean, and that just above the atmosphere was a solid firmament which contained the stars, sun and moon. And above this firmament was a heavenly ocean. That is why this chapter speaks of birds flying across the face of the *raqia* (firmament) (v. 20) which holds the sun and moon (vv. 14-17). And above this *raqia* is the primordial ocean (vv. 6-7).

While we know today that there is no *raqia*, and no heavenly

Discussion Point

ocean above the sun and moon, Genesis 1 wasn't written primarily for us but for people who lived in that thought-world. God used the mythical thought-world of the ancients as a vehicle for a message about himself.

Here is the key to Genesis 1: The focus of Genesis 1 is not the *creation* but the *Creator*. The God of the Hebrews was a radically different God from any of the gods of Egypt, Canaan or Mesopotamia. He taught the Hebrews that nothing that could be seen in the created world was a god, and he himself was invisible. While God created everything that could be seen, God himself was not a part of that creation. And God gave his people the seventh-day as a covenant by which they could signify that they worshipped this Creator of a perfect and complete world.

So the issue is not whether we do or don't believe what God wrote in Genesis 1, but whether we correctly interpret the genre and message of that chapter. If you continue to insist that Genesis 1 must be interpreted literally, you can only do so by denying the truths discovered by telescopes and reinforced by interplanetary satellites.

God bless you D

Ritchie.

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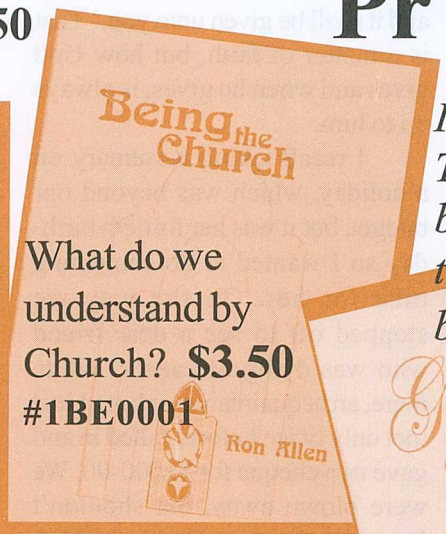

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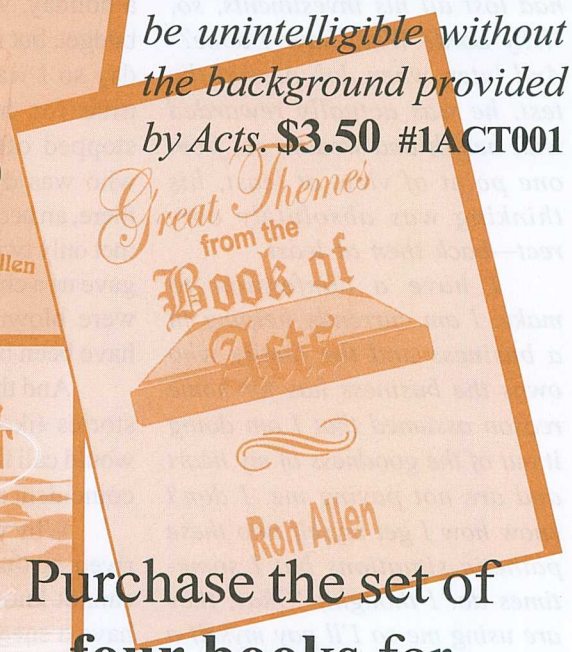

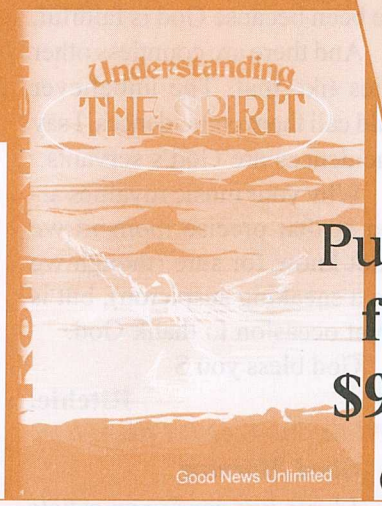

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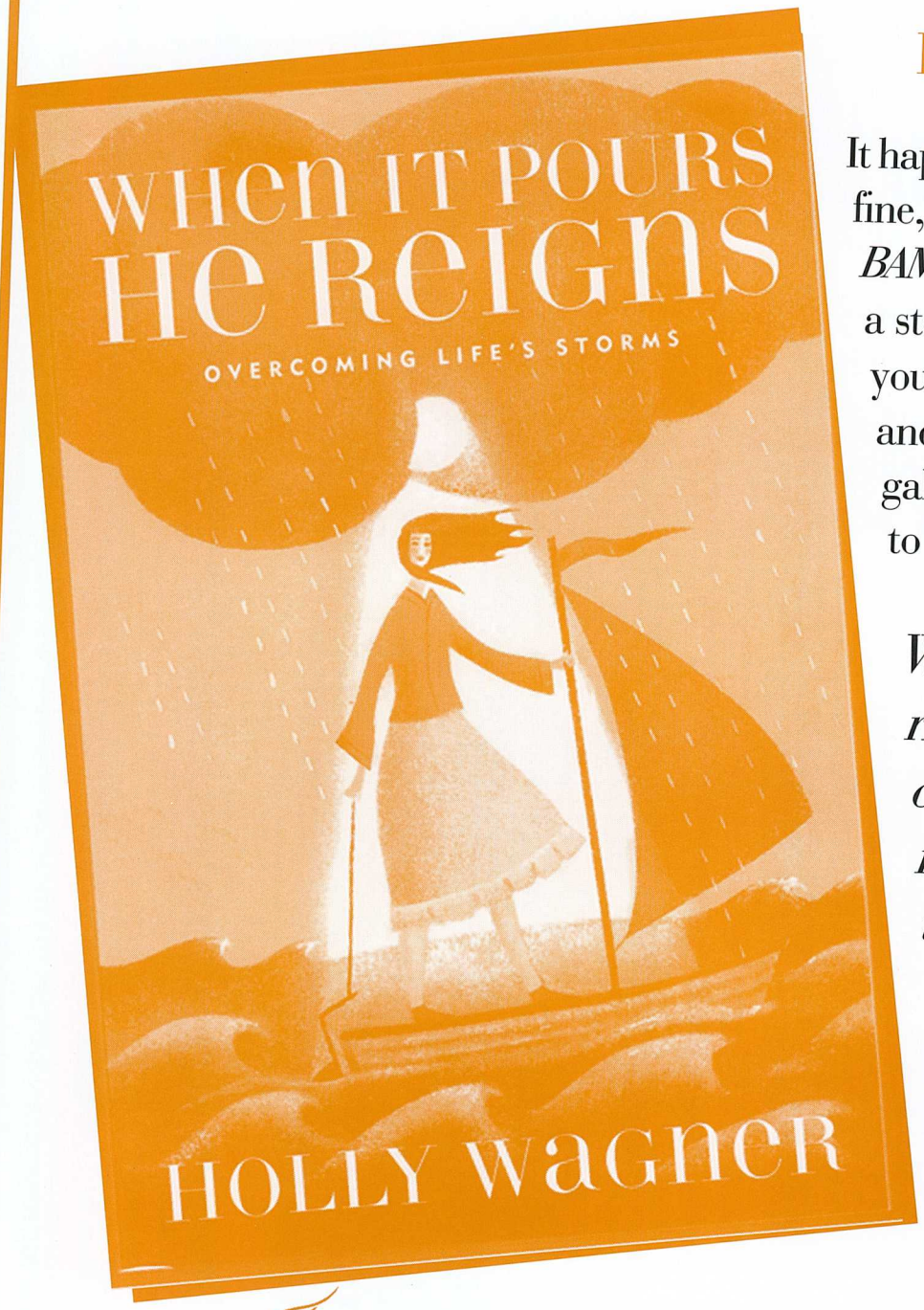

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John portrays two sets of 'confessions' or 'acknowledgments'— those by the saved and those by the lost. The lost acknowledge and confess that they have no sin and so walk in 'darkness' while the saved acknowledge (confess) that they do have sins and as a result of this confession (acknowledgment) of the presence of sin in their lives they continue to enjoy forgiveness and cleansing.

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