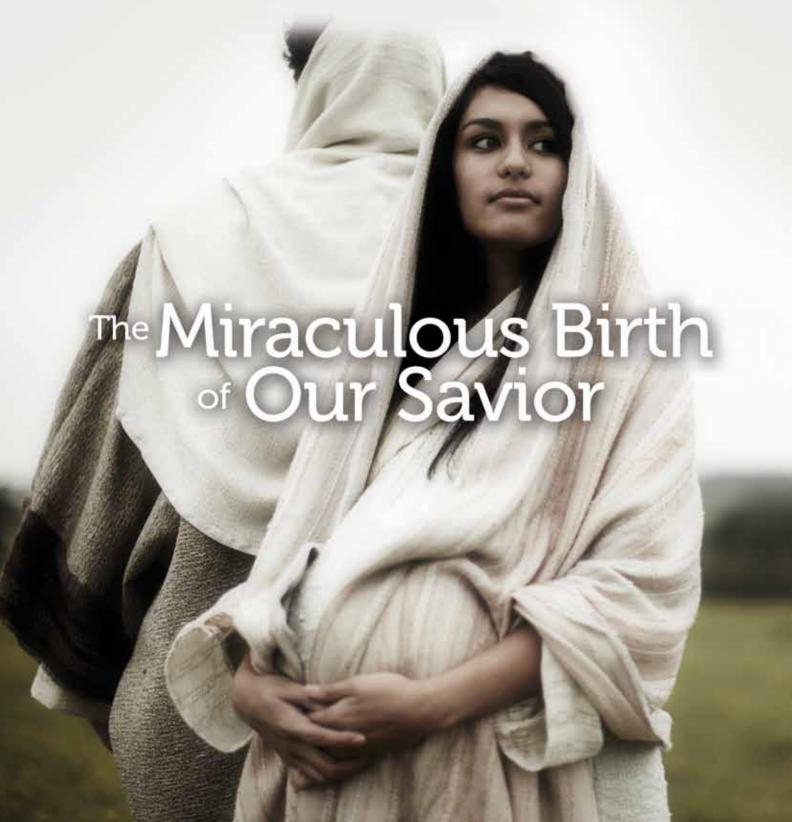
BRINGING THE TRUTH HOME



The Miraculous Birth of Our Savior







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We would like to thank Dr. Brian Collins for coordinating this issue of *FrontLine* magazine.

Brian Collins

The doctrine of the virgin birth of Christ—perhaps better stated as His virgin conception—was a flashpoint in the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy. James Orr, writing in *The Fundamentals*, explains the significance of this attack: "The attack is not confined, indeed, to the article of the Virgin birth. It affects the whole supernatural estimate of Christ—His life, His claims, His sinlessness, His miracles, His resurrection from the dead. But the Virgin birth is assailed with special vehemence, because it is supposed that the evidence for this miracle is more easily got rid of than the evidence for public facts, such as the resurrection" ("The Virgin Birth of Christ," 2:247).

Modernists claimed the virgin conception could be discarded with little cost. The Holy Spirit could have ensured the sinlessness of Christ without a virgin conception, the Modernists said. The hypostatic union, the union of God and man in one Person, could have taken place without a virgin conception. Doubtless. But if God can work the miracles of the hypostatic union and the resurrection, then surely He can work the miracle of the virgin conception. But if the virgin conception is incredible, so also are the hypostatic union and the resurrection. For this reason Fundamentalists stoutly defended the virgin conception and must continue to do so in the face of continued challenges.

This issue of *FrontLine* magazine meets these continued challenges by looking first at the Scriptural passages that ground the doctrine of the virgin conception and then by examining the significance of this

doctrine. The first article examines the foundational prophecy of the virgin conception: Isaiah 7:14. Though some claim that Isaiah is simply speaking of a young woman who will soon give birth, a sign that is typologically applied to Jesus' virgin birth by Matthew, Randy Jaeggli demonstrates that, in fact, Isaiah was prophesying the virgin conception of Jesus seven hundred years before it happened.

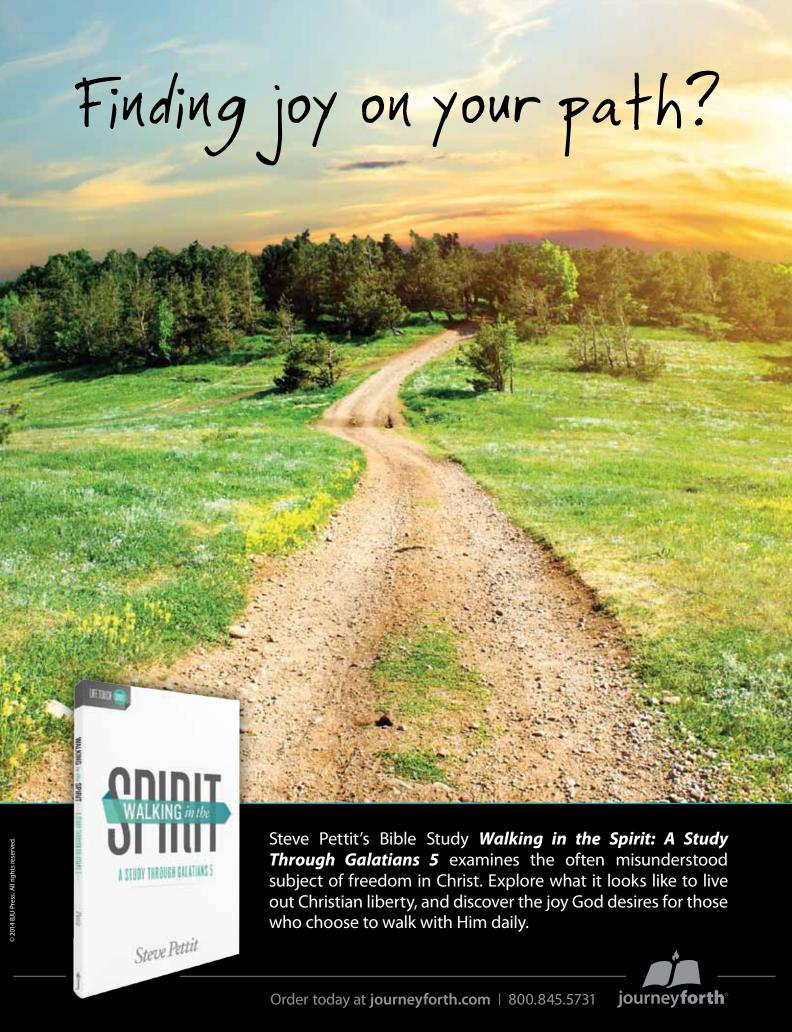
We then turn to the New Testament. Mark Minnick draws our attention to six indications in Matthew 1 that Jesus was definitely conceived of a virgin. Mark Ward points us to six indications in Luke 1 that challenge some recent claims that the virginal conception is inconsistent with Jesus' full humanity.

Joel Arnold continues the look at the theological implications of the virgin conception. He alerts us to possible dangers in our ideas about its significance, and he shows how the virgin conception fits into the Bible's storyline. Tim Berrey walks us through common theological objections to the virgin conception. He traces these objections for ancient times all the way through the present and demonstrates that the fundamental challenge to accepting the virgin conception is the challenge of believing that God works such miracles. And yours truly rounds out this theological study by looking more broadly at why Jesus' full humanity was absolutely necessary for Him to fulfill His roles as Prophet, Priest, and King.

Our hope is that this issue will strengthen your faith in the supernatural conception of our Lord and that you will come away with a greater appreciation for the incarnation from its very inception.



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Mail Bag & News from All Over

Thank you for the box of books [When Trouble Comes and The Wilds "Emergency Packs"]. I've already given some of them away.

FBFI CH (CPT) Alan Findley, deployed to Incirlik, Turkey

(Editor's Note: After a nine-month deployment to Incirlik, Turkey, Alan has returned to the US and recently been accepted into Active Duty status with the Air Force.)

Thank you very much for allowing us to use your article "[Is Modesty a Lost Cause?"] in our quarterly magazine last time. It was . . . a great blessing to a lot of our young ladies here at the church and in our other Independent Baptist Churches in Nigeria. You are highly appreciated.

I will please like to ask for your permission again to reprint one of your articles, "Biblical Sexual Ethics in Light of God's Institution of Marriage" in our quarterly magazine (*Eye Opener* magazine, Psalm 119v18.)

It will be a great blessing if we are granted the permission to do so again. Thank you, and may God bless you is my prayer.

Samuel Akande Associate/Young Adults' Pastor NIGERIA

The articles on the text and version issue were well written.

The Lord graciously permitted me to begin [a] teaching ministry in 1938. Being eager to have and to teach Scripture that was closest to the Original set me on a long and intensive search for the truth. I had sought to become more effective in countering the false doctrine of the Jehovah's Witnesses, so I obtained a Watchtower Bible. Unexpectedly, it was their love of the Alexandrian Text that shed light on this confusing issue. The following is a statement from the Foreword in *The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures:* "The Greek Text that we have used as the basis for our New World translation is the widely accepted Westcott and Hort text (1881), by reason of its admitted excellence." My resulting thought was immediate—If they think that a manuscript sequestered in the Vatican Library serves their purposes better than the time-tested Byzantine manuscripts, then something must be wrong! So, it would seem that the inclusion of information regarding the planned deception by Westcott and Hort would add much light on the confusing textual debate. (Hort, Life and Letters, Vols. 1 and 2 give much solid evidence of their plans to mislead and deceive.)

We appreciate all the good articles that come to us in *FrontLine*. May God continue to give us wisdom

Continued on page 28

In March, **Wayne Bley** (chair of FBFI Chaplaincy Commission) and his wife, Brenda, both ended their jobs in Virginia and drove west, finally settling in Chandler, Arizona, in late June. Both are now



busy at the International Baptist College and Seminary. Brenda is volunteering in the front office, and Wayne is teaching and working on his DMin with a focus on the selection and development of military chaplains.

.....

Dr. Marty Herron began his new duties as pastor of Harvest Baptist Church and Harvest Ministries in Barrigada, Guam, in 2000, after first coming to Guam in September 1999. The ministry at Harvest includes Harvest Baptist Bible College, training almost one hundred Micronesian islanders; Harvest Christian Academy with more than a thousand students from over fourteen nationalities in K3 through twelfth grade; and KHMG, Harvest Family Radio, a local Christian radio station at 88.1FM. Marty also serves on the FBFI Advisory Board.

•••••

Thomas L. Nieman represents Galilee Baptist Church of Kent, Washington, in the position of missionary/pastor at large. He has had the privilege of serving the Lord as a pastor for nearly forty-five years



and presently serves with Northwest Baptist Assistance Ministries. NWBAM assists pastors, missionaries, and other servants in local churches, primarily focusing on the northwestern United States as well as British Columbia and Alaska. Dr. Nieman assists in numerous areas, including starting new churches, helping existing struggling churches resolve crises, and conducting prophecy conferences. He can be contacted at northwestministry@gmail.com.

We want to hear from you!

Let us know what you like or don't like about *FrontLine*. Address your comments to **Managing Editor**, *FrontLine* **2801 Wade Hampton Blvd**, **Suite 115-165**,

Taylors, SC 29687 or send them by e-mail to info@fbfi.org.

You may request that your letter not be published or that your name be withheld, but anonymous letters will not be accepted.

Interpretational Elements in Isaiah 7:14



If one were to ask the average church member

if the Old Testament predicts the doctrine of the virgin birth of Christ, the answer would probably involve an affirmative citation of Isaiah 7:14. It might surprise many believers, however, to learn that conservative interpreters are far from unanimous agreement on just exactly *how* the verse makes such a prediction. Most interpretive perspectives fall into two categories: (1) a typological fulfillment or (2) a literal prediction that only Christ could fulfill. This article will argue for the second option and show that Isaiah 7:14 is an astounding prediction, over seven hundred years in advance, of the miraculous birth of our Savior from the womb of Mary.

The first step in interpreting Isaiah 7:14 is to examine the meaning of key words in the verse and the grammatical relationship of these words. When the interpreter does a good job of understanding these two elements, the meaning of the verse becomes quite clear. Here is my own, literal translation of the verse:

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you all a sign: Look! The virgin is pregnant and about to bear a son! And she will call His name Immanuel.

Two Kinds of Signs

The first word of importance is "a sign" (Hebrew, "oth). Signs were of two types: (1) a miraculous event meant to motivate someone to immediate action, and (2) an affirmation that a prediction had come to fulfillment when the sign would occur.\(^1\) The first usage is evident in the miracles Moses did in order to persuade Pharaoh to let Israel go free from captivity (Exod. 7:3). The second type of sign as a future confirmation of what God had predicted appears in Exodus 3:12, when God tells Moses, "Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token ["oth] unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain."

The usage of "oth" in Isaiah 7:14 is a sign of the second type. In the context of the verse, the Lord has already offered the Judean king, Ahaz, a sign of the first type. God told him that he could ask anything he wished as proof of the veracity of God's word, no matter how miraculous the sign (7:11). But the idolatrous king impiously answered that he would not put the Lord to the test by asking for a miracle (7:12). Isaiah, therefore, immediately switched his address from Ahaz to the entire house of David (7:13). In my translation of 7:14, note that I have translated the second person, personal pronoun (plural) as "you all." God gave the promise of the virgin birth of Christ to the entire nation, and it was a future confirmation to His people that He has the power to fulfill His promises of deliverance. Ahaz had no heart to trust God for deliverance from the military threat he faced in 735 BC, but the time would come when the Lord would confirm His power to save those who believe His word. Just as the sign Ahaz rejected was miraculous, so would the future confirmation sign be supernatural. As soon as the words of 7:14 left Isaiah's lips, the incarnation of Messiah became an imminent event. Of course, from our perspective we realize that it was another seven hundred years until the sign came to pass. The chronological fulfillment of prophecy is often inscrutable until after it comes to pass (1 Pet. 1:10–12).

Understanding the Word "Virgin"

The next key word is "virgin." The Hebrew word for "virgin" in 7:14 is "ālmā, the less common of two synonyms in Hebrew that refer to a woman who has never engaged in sexual relations (the other word is běthûlâ). Sometimes "ālmā is simply a designation for a young woman whose sexual purity is assumed but is not the focus of usage. An example is found in the narrative of Moses' mother hiding her son in a basket along the bank of the Nile. Moses' sister, Miriam, saw Pharaoh's daughter retrieve the basket from the water and asked if she should find a nurse for the baby. "And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother" (Exod. 2:8). Here the KJV translators appropriately translated "ălmā with the word "maid."

Other uses of *ʿālmâ*, however, demand a translation using the more technical English term "virgin." Probably the clearest proof appears in Genesis 24. This chapter is the story of Abraham's servant's search for a bride for Isaac. As the servant stands by a well in the city of Nahor, far from his home country, he prays that the Lord will show His will concerning the woman that Isaac should marry by sending her to the well and compelling her to offer him a drink of water—as

well as water for his ten very thirsty camels. Before the servant is done praying, he sees Rebekah approaching. Moses informs the reader that she is quite beautiful, and also that she is sexually pure: "a virgin, neither had any man known her" (Gen. 24:16). The term here for "virgin" (běthûlâ) was apparently not conclusive enough, because Moses adds "neither had any man known her." But when the servant later repeats the story to Rebekah's family, he uses the word 'ālmâ to describe her (24:43). Clearly, 'ālmâ is a word that describes a young woman whose purity is beyond question. Because Ahaz rejected a miraculous sign from the Lord, Isaiah 7:14 must be offering the house of David a sign at least as incredible as the one that Ahaz refused. Therefore, Isaiah uses 'ālmâ in 7:14 in the technical sense of a young woman who has never had sexual relations.²

When the Virgin Will Conceive

Now we come to the most amazing aspect of 7:14. The English versions all translate the next word in the verse as "will conceive," but the Hebrew word *hârâ* is not a verb—it is an adjective. As the Lord gives Isaiah a vision into the future, he sees the virgin (the noun has the definite article)³ who is pregnant! This situation has occurred only once in the history of the world, when Mary conceived by the agency of the Holy Spirit. The syntax of the verse does not allow for the possibility that Isaiah could be referring to a young virgin in the crowd on the day he spoke the promise of 7:14, and then some time later she was married, had sexual relations with her husband, and became pregnant. Rather, she must be a virgin and pregnant at the same time. As Isaiah sees her, she is also "about to bear a son," a Hebrew participle that refers to something that is just about to happen.⁴

Conclusion

The pregnant virgin will name the son she bears "Immanuel." Actually, this is a noun clause instead of a moniker, and it means "God is with us." When we compare Isaiah 7:14 with 9:6, we learn that this miraculously born son will also be divine. Only Jesus Christ fulfills all these descriptions. Someday He will return at His Second Advent and effect a miraculous deliverance for His people from the murderous intentions of the Antichrist (Rev. 19:11–21). And during the Church Age He graciously offers deliverance from sin, mankind's ultimate enemy, for all who place their faith in Him (Matt. 1:21).

Randy Jaeggli (PhD, Bob Jones University) is professor of Old Testament Interpretation at Bob Jones Seminary in Greenville, South Carolina, and serves as a deacon at Cornerstone Baptist Church.



For a fuller discussion, see J. A. Motyer, "Content and Context in the Interpretation of Isaiah 7:14," *Tyndale Bulletin* 21 (1970): 120.

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² "älmâ in Isaiah 7:14," Bibliotheca Sacra 137 (April–June 1980): 133–50.

³ "Peculiar to Hebrew is the employment of the article to denote a single person or thing (primarily one which is as yet unknown, and therefore not capable of being defined) as being present to the mind under given circumstances" (E. Kautzsch, ed., *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1910], 126q).

⁴This is the *futurum instans* use of the participle. See Kautzsch, 116p.

The Virgin Birth of Christ in

The first chapter of Matthew is designed to tell us the origin of the person whom we call Savior and Lord. Matthew begins with the genealogy of Jesus of Nazareth. Note carefully the wording of verse 16. It relates that "Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus."

Prior to this there is an almost monotonous repetition of so-and-so begat so-and-so begat so-and-so for forty-two generations. The word "begat" occurs thirty-nine times. But in verse 16 the pattern changes. Any reader would expect the verse to read that Jacob begat Joseph and Joseph begat Jesus. Instead the verse reads that Joseph was the husband of Mary "of whom was born Jesus."

The Greek language can convey the gender of the pronoun, and "whom" in Greek is a feminine pronoun. It's clearly pointing back not to Joseph but to Mary. Also, the term "born" in verse 16 is the very same term translated "begat" thirty-nine previous times in the genealogy. So Matthew, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, uses the same term forty times. But on the fortieth time, he assigns the term to the mother alone. That is obviously a suggestion that there is something unusual here.

Matthew is writing to Jews. They are reading the genealogy of their Messiah. Any of those who had read carefully would have noted this aberration. That's why Matthew then says, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise" (1:18). He is going to do something he didn't do with anyone else in the genealogy. Matthew will explain this one. In verses 18 through 24 Matthew gives six indications that this was definitely a virgin conception.

1. "When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child" (1:18).

This tells us the timing of the conception. It occurred during the espousal period. The espousal was entered into by the Jews when a young man gave to his prospective bride a sum of money and signed a document pledging his love and lifelong loyalty. When this brief ceremony was enacted, the man and woman had entered into an espousal period that lasted from a month to a year. It had much stricter obligations than do today's engagements. When a couple entered into an espousal period, they were already considered man and wife. This was so much the case that if either one of them was unfaithful during this period, the unfaithfulness is termed and penalized as adultery (Deut. 22:13–29). At the same time intimacy between the couple was prohibited. The only way the covenant could be broken was by death or divorce (Deut. 24:1–4).

When Matthew says "before they came together," he is communicating that there were no intimate relations between them. This is exactly what Mary has in mind when she reacts to Gabriel's announcement that she will be with child: "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" (Luke 1:34). This raises an important point. When someone raises the question of biological impossibility, recall that Mary herself raised that question. This is not a new question at all.

2. "She was found with child of the Holy Ghost" (1:18).

The answer of Heaven to Mary's question about biological impossibility was "the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee" (Luke 1:35). It's actually vague as to what the relationship is between the Holy Spirit and the conception. But the answer is intended to satisfy the question of biological impossibility. It will be a miracle from Heaven.

3. "Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily" (1:19).

Joseph's reaction communicates that he knows that Mary's child is not his child. Luke's Gospel states that



Matthew 1

immediately on hearing the news from Gabriel, Mary fled to the hill country to take up residence with her kinswoman Elizabeth. Luke states definitely that she was there three months. This provided the accountability that precluded all possibility that the child would be viewed as Joseph's. Joseph knows they have not been together. His response is based on the view that the baby must be someone else's.

For a long time there has been the accusation that Mary was immoral. This shows up in John's Gospel when the Jews snidely say to Jesus in a discussion about paternity, "We be not born of fornication" (John 8:41). Matthew 1:19 reveals, however, that the first person to raise the moral objection was the first man to hear the news.

4. "The angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream saying, . . . that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost" (1:20).

God gives this righteous man an angelic verification that Mary has not been immoral. The term translated "conceived" here is Matthew's old term "begat." That which is begotten in her, the thing that occurred naturally from father to son, in this case is a product of the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Joseph's response implies to every skeptical reader that he should do what Joseph did. He ought to accept that baby as the incarnate God who saves His people from their sins.

Luke uses a different term, the technical term, "conceive in thy womb." The incarnation is literally what the Bible expresses it to be: "The Word was made flesh" (John 1:14). Or it's literally what Paul writes in Galatians 4:4: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman." It is an absolute miracle. It is the Second Person of the Godhead somehow uniting with the physical reproductive cell of a human being. A literal conception takes place. And the only explanation is the Holy Spirit.

5. "Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child" (1:21–23).

Joseph has received angelic verification. But the angel goes further in verses 21 and 22. The angel assigns the name of the baby, saying, "Thou shalt call his name JESUS." The Greek word "Jesus" is the equivalent to the Old Testament word "Joshua," which means "Jehovah saves." The angel says to call the baby "Jehovah saves" because the baby will save. If Jehovah saves, and the baby saves, then who is the baby? Clearly the implication is exactly what is predicted with explicit clarity in the Old Testament. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given . . . and his name shall be called . . . mighty God" (Isa. 9:6).

The angel has Scripture to justify this naming. He quotes Isaiah 7:14. Seven hundred years earlier God said, "A virgin shall conceive."* Here, then, we have Old Testament Scriptural verification of the virgin conception.

6. "And [Joseph] knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS" (1:25).

Joseph called the name of that baby "Jehovah saves." End of account.

Why end of story? When you tell a story, you recount the facts, climaxing the story with the point. The point comes last. The Holy Spirit is giving us the point of the miracle.

In Matthew 1 the Holy Spirit follows Joseph's story. We read of his initial rejection, then the angelic verification, the Scriptural verification, and then the question, "What's Joseph going to do?" The story climaxes with Joseph's response: he called that baby "Jehovah saves."

Joseph's response implies to every skeptical reader that he should do what Joseph did. He ought to accept that baby as the incarnate God who saves His people from their sins.

Dr. Mark Minnick serves as senior pastor of Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina.



See Randy Jaeggli's article in this issue for a defense of the translation "virgin" in Isaiah 7:14.

FrontLine • N

The Ardennes Counteroffensive and Luke's Account of the Virgin Birth

Students of the two World Wars know that the densely forested

region of Belgium known as Ardennes was the scene of significant battles in 1914 (WWI); the 1940 German "Ardennes Offensive" in the battle for France; and the more well remembered "Ardennes Counteroffensive" of December 1944 and January 1945, called by reporters of the time "the Battle of the Bulge" because of the bulging of German front lines into territory considered won and held by the Allies.

Only a shrinking number of veterans, some historians, and descendants of those who lived in the region decades ago know the importance of the fierce and repeated battles fought there. I am thankful the Allies prevailed in the Ardennes Counteroffensive, which changed the course of history. But I can't say I spend much of my life thinking about it. I've got it neatly checked off from my "list of things learned about in school."

That's sort of the way I feel about the virgin birth (or "virginal conception"). I'm glad my Fundamentalist forebears won the battle to defend it. That victory has been bequeathed to me, and my life has been affected positively by it. I own the victory personally; it was *my* forefathers

who won it. But the fight seems so distant. Hardly any veterans are left who remember when the battle over the virgin birth saw live fire. At best it's a cold war.

However, the price of doctrinal fidelity may be eternal vigilance, and a few unexploded rounds from the old fight are still lying around. So take this edition of *FrontLine* as a providential opportunity to look for any defenses that need shoring, any ramparts that need to be watched o'er.

A Skirmish

There are still some skirmishes. One is Andrew T. Lincoln's recent book, *Born of a Virgin? Reconceiving Jesus in the Bible, Tradition, and Theology*. The title is sort of clever, in a near blasphemous way: "Reconceiving." And the question mark in the middle is ominous, especially considering that the publisher, Eerdmans, and the author, Lincoln, have ties to Evangelicalism.

Here's the key quote from Lincoln's book:

We can simply no longer think that a mother's input alone is sufficient to constitute a fully human person. Understood in the light of present biological knowledge, instead of guaranteeing Jesus' real participation in humanity, the virgin birth has just the opposite effect and becomes positively damaging to the doctrine of incarnation. Without complete human DNA Jesus would be a semi-divine or wholly divine special creation that appeared to be human (261–62).

Lincoln argues that if we want to maintain the doctrine of the full humanity and full divinity of Christ (and I think we do), we have to rethink the doctrine of the virgin birth. And I think we don't. If a careful student of the Bible finds that our doctrines don't fit Scripture, then by all means, correct us. But we don't pay our theologians to find errors in Scripture in order to firm up our doctrines.

Yet that's just what Lincoln attempts. To accomplish this recon-

ceiving, he has to suggest that separate "virgin birth" and "human father" traditions both wound up in the New Testament.

Lincoln's errors are easily spotted, but let's spot the two major ones anyway.

First, there can be no dueling, incompatible traditions inside a God-inspired Bible. If there are, then we necessarily become Scripture's judges rather than vice versa. The early church father Augustine, the greatest intellectual and theological force in the first few centuries of the church (for good and ill), saw this just as clearly 1700 years ago as we conservative Christians do today:

It seems to me that most disastrous consequences must follow upon our believing that anything false is found in the sacred books. . . . For if you once admit into such a high sanctuary of authority one false statement as made . . ., there will not be left a single sentence of those books which, if appearing to anyone difficult in practice or hard to believe, may not by the same fatal rule be explained away.*

Lincoln has given in to a "fatal rule" and has given up the authority of the Bible, replacing it with something else.

Second, it does seem as if that something else is "present biological knowledge," and it's always a terrible shame to give up Scriptural truths for that. This is the unexploded ordinance I referred to earlier. Every time Western Christians have turned around for three hundred years, we have been informed that "the science is settled." The idea that the progress of human knowledge makes all unchangeable doctrines (like those of Christianity) simply incredible has great power in our culture. But it's wrong, and Lincoln has bowed to it.

Luke's Account of the Virgin Birth

When present biological knowledge tells me I'm misunderstanding the Bible, I often find it helpful to pick up the Bible and read it. Let's just remind ourselves what Luke

However, the price of doctrinal fidelity may be eternal vigilance, and a few unexploded rounds from the old fight are still lying around.

in fact says about the virgin birth. In several very direct ways, Luke claims that Mary was a virgin:

- 1. Luke calls her a "virgin" twice (1:27).
- 2. Mary calls herself a virgin once. "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" (1:34). If Mary had understood the angel to be saying, "The first child of your upcoming marriage will be the Messiah," she wouldn't have asked "How shall this be?" Despite the woeful state of present biological knowledge at the time, this first-century peasant girl somehow knew that virgins don't bear sons.
- 3. In Luke 3:23 Luke inserts a curious phrase in the genealogy of Jesus: "being (as was supposed) the

son of Joseph." There's no reason for this parenthetical phrase if Joseph is Jesus' biological father.

And let me suggest three other less conclusive pieces of evidence for the virgin birth from the Luke passage:

- 1. The Lord is the one who opens every open womb, but the angel clearly promises something special, something different from all other births in history: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee" (Luke 1:35). Even John the Baptist didn't get a birth announcement like this.
- 2. It makes little sense for the angel to remind Mary that "with God nothing shall be impossible" (1:37) if what the angel is promising isn't miraculous.
- 3. A Jewish girl who slept with her fiancé (or a Roman soldier named Panthera, as some anti-Christian traditions later claimed) couldn't sing the beautifully holy Magnificat in Luke 1: "He that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name" (1:49).

The virgin birth is worth defending because it's true. And I close with this: go to a legal, free music service and search for "which was the son of," a setting of the genealogy of Jesus in Luke 3 by one of my favorite composers, Arvo Pärt. Read along in Scripture as you listen. God's plan for the world culminated in a miraculous conception, but every birth in Jesus' line was wrought by God.

Dr. Mark Lee Ward Jr. authors Bible textbooks at BJU Press and (in his spare time) designs church websites at Forward Design. He blogs at By Faith We Understand.

^{*}Augustine of Hippo, "Letters of St. Augustin," in *The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustin with a Sketch of His Life and Work*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. J. G. Cunningham, Vol. 1, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1886), 251–52.

Few people know that Ben Franklin, the consummate writer, inventor,

and politician, descended from Puritans—his grandfather was a Baptist missionary to the Indians and his father was a dissenter. Franklin himself financially supported a Presbyterian minister and attended a few services. But what ultimately turned him away was his mistaken feeling that Christianity was not useful. He found doctrine to be "uninteresting and unedifying since not a single moral principle was inculcated or enforced."¹

Sometimes, even believers view theology the way Franklin did—"It's fine for the pastors and theology students," we might incorrectly reason, "but the rest of us need something practical." And out of all our core doctrines, the virgin birth may seem like a great illustration. Have you ever consciously made a specific decision shaped by this doctrine? Certainly we ought to defend it tenaciously. But why? Do we know what makes the virgin birth so important?

The Big Picture

The answer lies in the biggest picture of all—the storyline of Scripture. Widen your viewfinder until every person is included in the frame—every man, woman, and child who has ever lived across human history. A vast crowd, yes, but we still share much in common. In spite of our apparent differences, we are all children of one man and one woman. Adam and Eve, the first sinners, were the beginning of a long stream of humanity that has flowed rancid and polluted ever since. Children of Adam, we needed no tutoring in his sinful ways.

But on the very day of Adam's first sin, God promised a redeemer. Like every other human being, He would be born. From these very fallen creatures, now diseased and dying, would spring up the One who would set them free. Amazingly, the original mission God gave them—be fruitful and multiply—would become the means of their deliverance.

But as generations passed, a problem became obvious. Humanity could be saved only by a redeemer who became one of us. And yet to be like us is to be diseased and dying. We needed healing from one of our own, but we were all too sick ourselves. Every child born was yet one more sinner added to the great epidemic.

Go back in your mind to the universal field of humanity—billions of faces, every one a life, an eternal soul; every one a desperate sinner without hope. And then there's one person who stands out among them all. He is also human, and yet He's something more. Everything about Him

was different. From childhood, He showed no symptoms of Adam's disease. In adulthood He authoritatively condemned sin in others but never hypocritically. In death He remained innocent, and death itself could not hold Him. No other human being ever lived like this; no other human ever died like this. From beginning to end, He was clearly different from the rest, because even the conception of Christ sets Him apart from the stream of humanity.

There's a common view that the virgin birth allowed Jesus to be sinless because the sin nature is transferred by fathers.² While my wife is godlier than I, and while both of my sons clearly inherited their least laudable traits from me, Scripture nowhere indicates that only men are the carriers. On the contrary, any human—male or female—is sinful enough to spread the disease. Jesus was sinless not because of the mechanics of His conception but by the power of the Spirit and the sinlessness of His pre-existing person.

Rather, the virgin birth points to something much more profound. Where the history of Adam's line is the story of abject failure, Jesus began a new stream of humanity—humanity as it was always intended to be. Returning again to the prophecy in the garden, His uniqueness was in fact connected to Adam's line. He is the second Adam; a new start to the human race. As such, it was critical that this new scion be separate from the old. And yet He is born of a woman. He is fully human—as fully human as any person who ever lived.

The virgin birth reminds us of His humanity and His deity. Would we not be tempted to think of Him as merely human if He had been conceived by two parents? At what point would He then have "become God" rather than from the very beginning as Scripture requires? Rather, is there not a powerful statement about His person—fully God and fully man—even in His being born to a human through the power of the Holy Ghost?

But theological dangers call us back. For Jesus was not half human and half divine, as if begotten of a hybrid pedigree. More subtly, He existed as God eternally before the human nature ever existed, and both natures somehow existed in one unified person. The texts that describe the virgin birth give us one clue. When the Holy Ghost overshadowed Mary, what was *created* in her was the Christ. In some way that also incorporated Mary's substance, the eternal God took flesh by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Beyond that we simply don't know. And at the end, the virgin birth brings us back to where we started—highlighting the fundamentally miraculous nature of this person. Even by not answering our curiosity into the theological specifics of Jesus' person and His beginning, Scripture reminds us that He is utterly unique.

The implications of the virgin birth, then, are even grander than we might have dared to hope. The first man failed. We who are his children—every one of us—share in his condemnation. But with Jesus begins a new humanity. He has taken on humanity, but His is a new humanity. To Adam we owe our birth but also our death; to Christ we owe our new birth and our eternity. Adam's disobedience marred God's good world; Jesus' obedience will restore it again. Adam's progeny spread

sin, destruction, and death on planet earth. But Jesus' redeemed children now spread the news of salvation, restoration, and life around the globe.

This contrast is so fundamental, so absolute, it places new categories on all of mankind. Every person you ever meet falls into one of two groups—he is either in Adam or in Christ (Rom. 5), and our eternal fate follows accordingly. You were born into Adam's family, but by trusting in Christ, you receive a new identity. We stand redeemed because of our new relationship to God's Son.

The Theological Significance of the Virgin Birth

Now the significance of the virgin birth becomes clearer. Space permits only three reflections.

- 1. Realize what it cost to save you. "Of course God will forgive me," you sometimes hear. "That's His job." But this completely ignores the depth of our plight. Salvation is not merely an easy acquittal; it's exceedingly complex. This rescue plan was so costly, in fact, that it required a miraculous conception beginning an incomprehensibly unique life. Only the wisdom of God could engineer a plan so intricate; only His love could will it into being; only His power could bring it to pass.
- 2. Marvel at the extraordinary uniqueness of your Savior. Our miraculous salvation is embodied in the person of our Savior. Only He could save you because He became miraculously unique in every way fully human and fully God. The virgin birth set Him apart from every other human being, and that was only the beginning.
- **3. Remember who you are.** Since every person belongs either to Adam's progeny or Christ's, your identity is wrapped up in His. You are forever changed. Live that way. Each time you look into someone's eyes, that person is either Christ's or is still dying in the ravages of Adam's disease. Show love to Adam's children by sharing the good news; show love to Christ's children by drawing them to be like Him.

The virgin birth is hardly a scholastic fancy suited only for academics. In this miraculous beginning to the life of your eternal Savior lies the miraculous beginning of your life, your eternity, and your salvation.

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Walter Isaacson, Benjamin Franklin, 5–14, 84–85.

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²Unfortunately, this same concern for Christ's sinlessness lay behind the Roman Catholic declaration that Mary was sinless as well and miraculously conceived. This would logically imply, I suppose, that if a viable zygote could be genetically engineered from two female gametes, the resulting human would be sinless? Clearly not. Granted, this is purely hypothetical, but with genetic innovation ongoing, it probably won't stay that way.

Behind Objections to the Virgin Birth

Baptist theologian Millard Erickson asserts that the virgin birth of Christ is the second most disputed event in the life of Christ (the first being His resurrection). Second-century Christian writers, such as Ignatius (the bishop of Antioch who died in AD 117) and the Christian apologist Justin Martyr (AD 100–165) were already battling for it in their day against early Gnostic writers, such as the infamous heretic Marcion (ca. 85–160), and against Greco-Roman philosophers.

Its rejection continues into more modern times, from French philosopher Ernest Renan's *The Life of Jesus* (1863) to German theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg's more recent *Jesus—God and Man* (1968). Even a gifted commentator such as Scottish professor William Barclay distanced himself from belief in the virgin birth. America has had its own disbelievers, such as Thomas Jefferson, Harry Emerson Fosdick, Episcopalian John Shelby Spong, and Methodist Bishop Joseph Sprague.

Why such persistent objection to the doctrine of the virgin birth when the birth narratives in Matthew 1:18–25 and Luke 1:26–38 seem exceptionally clear? We could cite a few oft-stated objections: parallels with pagan religions (e.g., Greek mythology, Buddhism, Hinduism); the "uncomfortable silence" of most of the New Testament (especially John and Paul) on the subject; discrepancies within the birth narratives themselves; obvious theological motivation (which annuls any historical objectivity); irreconcilability with other Christological doctrines; and its blunt supernaturalism (which opposes naturalism and historicism³).

"Blunt Supernaturalism" and "Theological Objections"

Perhaps the fundamental reason for objection to the virgin birth is the latter: its blunt supernaturalism. To concede the virgin birth one must then bow before Jesus as someone divine and uniquely supernatural. The so-called "pagan parallels" are far from the Biblical account and, frankly, counterfeit. Zeus engages in gross physical immorality, and the virginity of the woman is typically not in view at all. Hindu's Krishna, allegedly virgin-born, was the eighth child of his mother. Buddha's own statements contradict the later traditions of his virgin birth. No alleged parallel has the clarity and authenticity of the Scripture's prediction-fulfillment of the virgin birth of Jesus. What the Bible claims for Christ is something inconceivably beyond. Efforts to find discrepancies in the narratives or argue for the "silence" of the rest of the New Testament are

also usually rooted in the same antisupernaturalistic bias. The alleged variations in the accounts are easily explainable, and there are other NT passages which, if they do not expressly teach the virgin birth, imply or certainly allow for it (Mark 6:3; John 8:41; Gal. 4:4).⁵

Most other denials of the virgin birth can be lumped under the head of theological objections. Machen's survey of second-century-AD objections to the virgin birth reached a similar conclusion: these denials "were based upon philosophical or dogmatic prepossession," not really upon historical incongruities.6 "Dogmatic prepossessions" lead men to deny the virgin birth for contrasting reasons: William Barclay because it makes Christ something short of human, and Wolfhart Pannenberg because it contradicts Christ's preexistence as the Son of God. Pannenberg, for example, makes the following statement: "The legend of Jesus' virgin birth stands in an irreconcilable contradiction to the Christology of the incarnation of the preexistent Son of God found in Paul and John."7 In other words, if the virgin birth is true then Jesus "became God's Son through Mary's conception."8 Barclay (amongst others) is guilty of an a priori assumption as to what is necessary in order for there to be a complete incarnation. 9 If one is not the product of human procreation, is one not then fully human? What about Adam and Eve?! Or in vitro fertilization? Did Jesus' genetic code lack something since He had only a human mother? Jesus clearly had something more genetically than what He would have received through Mary only, since He was a male. 10 Were the *ancients* so ignorant about these kinds of things that they propounded a supernatural theory of origins, the ramifications of which only we moderns can unscramble? No doubt we are the people, and wisdom will die with us!

Theology or Scripture?

Pannenberg falls into the trap of allowing one's theology to trample over clear statements of Scripture. A careful reading of Luke 1:32, 35 shows that Mary's offspring is not said to *become* the Son of God but to be *called* the Son of God. John 1 makes clear that Jesus did pre-exist (v. 1) before He was incarnated (v. 14). Philippians 2 also pointedly asserts that Jesus existed in the form of God before He relinquished the free exercise of the prerogatives of His deity and was made in the likeness of man (vv. 6, 7). The birth narratives then reveal *how* the pre-existent Son of God became man—via a virgin birth. James Orr reminds us that we are dealing foremost not with theology but with *fact*. ¹¹ Scripture affirms the virgin birth not because of its theological plausibility but because of its historical

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actuality. It is a fact that we must work into our theology. Thus Pannenberg (and company) have failed to work all the facts of Scripture into their theology.

Are there things we cannot explain? Of course! After all, we are talking about a miracle—and we should not be surprised if we do not have all the answers. ¹² The birth narratives of Matthew and Luke are lucid enough *for all those willing to believe*. In the words of Blaise Pascal, "[God] has so regulated the means of knowing him, as to give indications of himself, which are plain to those who seek him, and obscure to those who seek him not. There is light enough for those whose main wish is to see; and darkness enough for those of the opposite disposition."¹³

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¹³ Thoughts of Blaise Pascal (Andover: Allen, Morrill and Wardwell, 1846), 274.



¹ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2013), 675.

² A straightforward reading of the birth narratives clearly delineates a virgin birth. See Dr. Mark Minnick's "The Virgin Birth of Christ in Matthew 1" in this issue.

³ For example, Troeltsch's "Principle of Analogy," which discredits any and all miraculous activity by asserting that if it is not happening currently we cannot *know* that it happened in the past.

⁴ In fact, the Arian Catholic Church can evade only Scripture's clarity by opining that the church tweaked the "facts" to make them fit the prophecies. See http://arian-catholic.org (accessed August 25, 2014).

⁵ Genesis 3:15, which identifies the future Messiah as the seed of the woman in a world where lineage was always traced through the man, may also anticipate the virgin birth. It certainly does not contradict it.

⁶ J. Gresham Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ* (Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1930; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1965), 43.

⁷ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man*, 2nd ed., trans. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1977), 143.

⁸ Ibid.

Donald Macleod, *The Person of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 34.

¹⁰ Erickson, 686.

¹¹ James Orr, *The Virgin Birth of Christ* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), 23.

¹² A comment made about the miracle of Creation by John S. Feinberg in *No One Like Him* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 610.



The doctrine of the virgin conception of Jesus played a

significant role in the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy because a virgin conception is clearly a supernatural occurrence. But the virgin conception also points to another important theological truth: Jesus is fully human.

Why does Christ need to be fully man? Scripture teaches that Christ needed to be fully human in order to fulfill the offices of prophet, priest, and king.

The Perfect Prophet

A prophet is a man who mediates a message from God to other men. Deuteronomy 18:15, 16 reveals that Israel pleaded with God for an intermediary to bring His message to them. They feared death if God continued to communicate directly to them. Moses was the great prophet that God spoke through. When Aaron and Miriam tried to usurp Moses' position by claiming that God had spoken through them as well, God revealed that Moses stood in a special relationship to Himself: "With him will I speak mouth to mouth . . . and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold" (Num. 12:8).

Before he dies Moses reveals that God would continue to honor the people's request for a prophet to mediate between them and God: "The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken" (Deut. 18:15). The Jews were still expecting this prophet in the days of Jesus. They asked John the Baptist, "Art thou that prophet?" (John 1:21).

John was not, but Jesus was the prophet like unto Moses. Indeed, Jesus was greater than Moses. Moses gave the law (which was glorious, 2 Cor. 3:7), but Jesus could reveal grace and truth (John 1:14–18) beyond the fringes of glory that Moses saw (Exod. 34:6, 7). Though Moses spoke mouth-to-mouth with and saw the Lord's similitude, he had not seen God. But the Son had seen God, for He dwelt in the Father's bosom and could declare Him (John 1:18). He was the Word who was God, but also the Word "made flesh" (John 1:1, 14).

The people recognized that Jesus was a prophet. They saw His miracles and "glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us" (Luke 7:16; cf. John 9:17). When a Pharisee doubted that Jesus was a prophet, Jesus vindicated Himself by responding to the man's thoughts (Luke 7:39–47). The Pharisees sought to discredit Jesus as a prophet (John 7:52). When the soldiers mocked Jesus by blindfolding Him and taunting Him to prophesy who hit Him (Mark 14:65), they were challenging His claim to be a prophet.

After Jesus' death and resurrection Peter proclaimed that Jesus fulfilled the promise of Deuteronomy 18. The Lord had raised up a prophet like Moses, and therefore the people should turn from their iniquities and take heed to all that Jesus said (Acts 3:19–26).

The Perfect Priest

The Old Testament reveals that sacrifice is necessary for sinful people to approach God. In the chapter immediately following the record of the Fall, Scripture tells about the sacrifices that Cain and Abel offered in worship. The location of Leviticus in the Pentateuch also reveals the necessity of priests and sacrifices. Exodus closes with the erection of the tabernacle, the symbol of God's presence. Since man was driven from the presence of God because of his sin (Gen. 3:23, 24), Leviticus answers the question of how God can once again take up residence in the midst of sinners (Lev. 26:11–13).1 And yet as Israel's history progressed and the sin of the people was shown to be written with an iron pen on their hearts, God said that He would rather have the people's loyal love and real knowledge of Him than their sacrifices and burnt offerings (Hos. 6:6). Indeed, God said He did not require these people to come trampling through the courts of the temple. He did not delight in the blood of their bulls and goats; their incense was an abomination to Him. They had to be clean if they were going to come before Him (Isa. 1:11–17). Since purifying the unclean was the job of the sacrificial system, it was unclear how God would make their scarlet sins as white as snow and wool (Isa. 1:18). But as the book progresses Isaiah reveals that God would blot out their transgressions "for [His] own sake" by making His Servant a guilt offering for them (Isa. 53:10). Philip declared to the Ethiopian eunuch that Jesus fulfilled



this prophecy on the cross (Acts 8:32–35). The shedding of Jesus's blood was the propitiation, or satisfaction of God's wrath, for sin (Rom. 3:25). In order to fulfill this role Jesus had to be a man. As the eternal God, He could not die. An animal was not a fitting or sufficient ultimate sacrifice for human sin. Jesus had to come "in the likeness of sinful flesh" so that God could condemn "sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3). Paul says, "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor. 15:21).

The Book of Hebrews reveals that the significance of Jesus' humanity for His priestly ministry lies in the present as well as in the past. The author points out that Jesus took on a human nature, not an angelic one, because it was fitting for Him to be "made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest." This was true not only so that He could "make reconciliation for the sins of the people," but also so He could be tempted and so be able to strengthen those who are tempted (Heb. 2:16–18). Jesus' sacrifice was completed once and with finality (Heb. 7:27), but His priestly ministry continues. He continues to make intercession for those "that come unto God by him" (Heb. 7:25). Because of Jesus' priestly intercession, believers can come boldly to the throne of grace for mercy and help. They can be assured that Jesus is a sympathetic high priest. Jesus was sinless and thus able to be a substitutionary sacrifice in our place. But He was also "in all points tempted like as we are," and thus able to empathize with our infirmities in the face of temptation (Heb. 4:14–16).

The Perfect King

John prepared the way for Jesus by announcing, "the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15). When Jesus traveled through Israel preaching, He preached "the kingdom of God" (Luke 4:43; 8:1). When Peter preached at Pentecost, he proclaimed that Jesus had been enthroned at the Father's right hand (Acts 2:30–36). When the gospel went forth unfettered from Paul's Roman prison, it was the gospel of the kingdom that he preached (Acts 28:31).

But what did it mean to say the kingdom of God drew near in the ministry of Jesus? God has always been sovereign over all things (Ps. 29:10; Jer. 10:10; Lam. 5:19). The answer is that the ruler of God's kingdom on earth must be a man.² Isaiah says that the promised king who will bear the government on his shoulder will rule "upon the throne of David" (Isa. 9:7). This is why Matthew opens his Gospel with the words, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David" (Matt. 1:1). Jesus had to be a son of David to be the king promised in the Old Testament.

But the promise goes much deeper than David. Matthew also says that Jesus is "the son of Abraham." God's promises to David were an elaboration of promises He made to Abraham. God had told Abraham, "kings shall come out of thee" (Gen. 17:6). In addition, the promises to Abraham of a nation of offspring, a great name, land, and the opportunity to be a blessing to others are kingly promises.³ In the context of Genesis these kingly promises are made to Abraham as part of a covenant designed to restore what the Fall had damaged. Blessing, seed, and kingship are first found in God's first promises to mankind in Genesis 1:26–28. God gave man dominion "over all the earth." This dominion, damaged by the Fall, will be restored when the man Christ Jesus rules over all the earth (Heb. 2:6–9).

As our Prophet, Priest, and King, it is vital that Jesus be both God and Man.

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¹Robert D. Bell, *The Theological Messages of the Old Testament Books* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 2010), 59–60.

² Isaiah also reveals that the promised king must be God. Isaiah spoke of Yahweh ruling as king from the Davidic city of Zion (2:3; cf. 52:7). The rule of Yahweh in Zion may at first glance appear to be something different than the rule of the promised Davidic king, but Isaiah connects the two. A person called "Mighty God" will sit on the throne of David (9:6, 7). This Davidic king will not only rule the world in righteousness (11:3–5; 16:3–5), but He will also restore the earth to Edenic conditions (11:6–9). How could a descendant of David—a man—be Yahweh ruling in Zion? Isaiah provides the answer to that question also. Isaiah told a king panicked at the threat to his life (which was also a threat to the Davidic line, 7:6) that a virgin would give birth to a son who would be named "God with us."

³Gordon J. Wenham, "Genesis 1–15," Word Biblical Commentary, ed. David A. Hubbard (Nashville: Nelson, 1987), 275.

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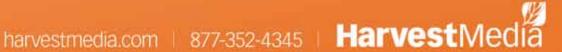




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SOUND WORDS

HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS—2 TIMOTHY 1:13

First Partaker

A One-Woman Man Who's Temperate

A minister's reputation is extremely fragile, particularly regarding even a suggestion of sexual impropriety. While the world may turn a blind eye to the peccadillos and even the widely publicized adulteries of its politicians, sports heroes, and movie stars, it will swarm to any scent of a preacher's indiscretion in his relations to women. The damage to the ministry can be incalculable.

On one occasion a drunken beggar in Kidderminster put out that he'd seen the town's Puritan minister, Richard Baxter, under a tree with a woman of ill fame. Soon all the drunkards were parroting the slander. Baxter was constrained to take them to court, where one of them finally confessed that he had seen Baxter on horseback on a rainy day take shelter under an oak growing in a thick hedge. A woman had indeed been standing for shelter under the same tree, but on its other side, and neither she nor Baxter was aware of the other.

Had Baxter been unable to expose the truth, his influence in Kidderminster would undoubtedly have withered, if not died altogether. When you survey the outcome of his ministry in subsequent years, including not only the sound conversion of hundreds of people but also the inspiration of it to generations of preachers through their reading his account in *The Reformed Pastor*, the disastrous consequences of that piece of slander could have been immense. It's not surprising, then, that one of the qualifications for a minister concerns his sexual morality.

Two issues ago in FrontLine we took up the husband of one wife qualification for both elders and deacons

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(1 Tim. 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6). The expression reads literally, of one woman a man, or, as it is commonly understood, a one-woman man. But what does this mean?

"The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits" (2 Tim. 2:6)

I discussed four views. That discussion was governed

to some extent by the fact that the exact reverse of this expression is required of older widows who are qualified for regular church beneficence. Such a widow must have been of one man a woman, or a one-man woman. Whatever this qualification means for widows, the reverse is most likely what it means for elders and deacons. That assumption contributed to the following conclusions.

First, the qualification almost certainly does not prohibit unmarried men from serving in the office of an elder. Though elders generally are married, they are not required to be. Second, the qualification does not prohibit remarried widowers from serving. Third, the question of whether it excludes remarried divorcés is almost always settled by a church's broader position on divorce rather than by any nuance in the wording of the qualification itself. Those who believe that divorce and remarriage are unlawful believe as a corollary that no divorced-and-remarried man may be an elder or deacon. On the other hand, those who allow for divorce and remarriage under certain circumstances will often (though not always) allow a divorced-and-remarried man to serve in these offices.

That brings us to the fourth view.

No Polygamists

When I had been in pastoral ministry just a few years, a missionary to a third-world African nation asked our church leaders about the issue of polygamy. In keeping with their culture, several of his new converts had multiple wives. Could they be church leaders if they continued living with more than one woman?

There are still scores of nations, particularly African or Muslim, that allow polygamous marriages

or partnerships. This qualification unquestionably applies to such cultures and prohibits a bigamist or polygamist from serving in the church offices. However, missionaries and other church leaders in these countries find themselves confronted with the further question as to whether a *former* polygamist might serve. Help in answering that may emerge from pondering again the identical qualification for an older widow (1 Tim. 5:9). It appears to be referring to her past. If the past is a consideration for receiving regular financial aid from the church, one would assume that it would be even more so for being qualified to lead it. In fact, one can imagine how easily a leader could be accused of

Sometimes an objection is raised on the grounds that multiple marriages were allowed in the Old Testament. If the patriarchs and kings, especially David, were allowed multiple wives, why might not an elder or a deacon be allowed the same liberty in a nation whose laws permit it?

hypocrisy if he refuses church assistance on the grounds that years ago a widow has been immoral, even though he has once been a polygamist himself. If a widow's past can disqualify her, why would it not also disqualify a potential church leader? Perhaps this consideration might have some bearing as well upon the question of divorcés serving in office.

Sometimes an objection is raised on the grounds that multiple marriages were allowed in the Old Testament. If the patriarchs and kings, especially David, were allowed multiple wives, why might not an elder or a deacon be allowed the same liberty in a nation whose laws permit it?

John Calvin addressed this question in a sermon given over almost entirely to this one qualification. There is no doubt, he preached, but when the holy Patriarchs had many wives, they were led amiss and marred by the evil custom [of their culture]. After that Abraham and Jacob had once used this, then fell David, and such others to it, and this is the reason why this custom was used amongst the Jews even in Saint Paul's time.²

But Calvin argued rightly that cultural allowance is not the issue. God's original design of marriage is the deciding factor. God made this rule . . . that they two should be one flesh. He saith not three or four, but as the woman is made for the man, so on the other side, the man was created for the woman. And therefore it is a matter far out of square and clean against God's mind and purpose for a man to have two wives.

Calvin's argument is grounded on the same passage that our Lord quoted when answering the Pharisees' question about divorce and remarriage (Matt. 19:1–9). Our Lord's conclusion, *From the beginning it was not so* (19:8), would apply just as appropriately to polygamy as it does to divorce and remarriage.

Using this way of settling this debate as an example, Calvin went on to admonish ministers to hold to a rule that applies equally to our handling of all the qualifications. Let us always hold this rule (as it ought to be infallible), that we take that for naught [an evil or wicked thing] which God forbiddeth, although all the world go clean contrary; and take that for good which God commandeth, although all the world make no count of it.

A Broader Application

Although the application of *a one-woman man* to polygamy is unquestionable, that doesn't mean that there is no further point to it. Is it possible that it has wider implications?

Many interpreters, particularly those in pastoral ministry themselves, tend to extend the application to the entire scope of an elder's or deacon's sexual morality. One pastor writes, The correct sense here is not quantitative, but qualitative. The man is truly a one-woman man. There are no other women in his life. He is totally faithful. He does not flirt. There are no dalliances.³ Another concludes, There are a lot of men who have only one wife but are not one-woman men (Matt. 5:27–28). They are the husband of one but the lover of two or three more. In its primary aspect, a one-woman man simply means a man who is devoted to the woman who is his wife. His eyes and heart remain focused on her.⁴

I personally think that this broader application may be precisely the Divine genius underlying the expression, *a one-woman man*. One reason it seems particularly plausible to me is that in His Word, God gives an almost unequaled stress to sexual purity. Robertson McQuilkin, one-time president of Columbia International University (1968–90), observes,

God's standards on human sexuality are treated in Scripture as the most important of all rules for relations among people. In the Old Testament, teaching against adultery is emphasized second only to teaching against idolatry. In the New Testament, both Christ and the apostles emphasized marital fidelity. Paul includes sexual sins in every one of his many lists of sins, and in most cases they head the list and receive the greatest emphasis.⁵

This being the case, and first-century Greco-Roman culture being as sexually promiscuous as it was, it would be astounding to find nothing in the qualifications concerning sexual morality other than a bald prohibition against polygamy. On the other hand, simply including further prohibitions against fornication and adultery wouldn't quite get down deep enough to test a man's character as well as his conduct. What is needed is something like what Derek Kidner refers to in his excel-

lent work on Proverbs. He observes perceptively that there are details of character small enough to escape the mesh of the law and the broadsides of the prophets, and yet decisive in personal dealings. Proverbs, he says, moves in this realm.

That's what an expression like *one-woman man* may be doing: treating a detail of character too subtle to be expressed entirely by broad prohibitions. It may be a requirement getting at the spirit of sexual purity—the spirit that confines itself *in every way* to giving its ardor to only one woman.

There are all sorts of ways, external and internal, bodily and mentally, observable and invisible, of being inappropriately amorous. Requiring that an elder or deacon be *a man of one woman* may be a broad way of forbidding them all, just as Job's testimony (*I made a covenant with mine eyes*, Job 31:1) tells all that needs to be said about his marital faithfulness.

The spirit of this qualification is what Winston Churchill displayed when he was asked publicly at a formal banquet, If you could not be who you are, who would you like to be? Churchill rose and began, If I could not be who I am, I would most like to be—and here he paused to take his beloved wife's hand—Lady Churchill's second husband.⁷ It must have brought the house down! And what a great way of claiming to be a one-woman man!

An older preacher, whose life remained blameless right through to his home-to-glory going, once told the ministerial class at Bob Jones University, Fellas, when you get out into the ministry, falling into adultery will be as easy as falling off a log. Even if slightly overstated, that's not far from the mark. Especially in this age.

Do a little comparison with me. Let's take Jonathan Edwards. He lived just a short while away from us as world history goes. It's in the days of Colonial America, just a few decades previous to the American Revolution. In all of the colonies combined there are less than 200,000 English inhabitants. He pastors in Northampton, Massachusettes, a Connecticut Valley town of only about 200 families. There are no co-ed health clubs, no multistoried hotels with scores of backcorridor rooms, no vast corporate complexes housing floors of private offices, and no comfortable cars with tinted windows that look just like any one of a hundred other local cars of their same color, year, and model. In addition, young women don't move into gigantic apartment complexes to live on their own. They remain in their parents' homes until married. Once married they almost immediately have children, and more children, and still more children. They're pretty much preoccupied with domestic duties from morning to night. And in small-town New England, everybody knows everybody else and everybody's business, especially the preacher's. How easy would it have been for Jonathan Edwards to develop an illicit relationship? Well, it could be done. But what happened to people if they did? What was the community's reaction? What was the price to be paid?

Let's go a little further with comparisons. How

likely was it that Edwards would encounter something pornographic? Photography wasn't invented until over eighty years after his death in 1758.

It was possible to see immoral paintings or lewd statuary. But how common and available was it? The population of even New York City, well over 150 miles away, was less than 20,000 people. If Edwards had really set his mind on glimpsing some pornographic art or purchasing some of it in secret, where would he have found it? What would he have had to do to get at it?

Our world is . . . well . . . the world of Paul and Timothy! A world of impudent immorality, shameful sights, and easy, anonymous access to fearful depravity. Yet the standard then and the standard now is to be blameless in the area of sexual morality and faithfulness.

The point is obvious. Our world isn't Jonathan Edwards's world. Our world isn't even the world of our grandparents. It's much more relentlessly threatening to a *one-woman man* commitment. Our world is . . . well . . . the world of Paul and Timothy! A world of impudent immorality, shameful sights, and easy, anonymous access to fearful depravity. Yet the standard then and the standard now is to be *blameless* in the area of sexual morality and faithfulness. In character, thought, and living, a blamelessly *one-woman man*. A man whose life raises no questions about this area.

Someone observed of G. Campbell Morgan that no breath of scandal ever brushed his life. That seems to be the necessary, rigorous qualification. Maintaining it will require lifelong vigilance and taking decisive measures with oneself that may feel like plucking out one's eye and cutting off one's hand (Matt. 5:29, 30). But to stay qualified for bringing God glory in the ministerial office is immeasurably more than worth all that is required.

Temperate

The third qualification is translated *vigilant* (*nēphalios*) here in 1 Timothy 3:2 and *sober* in verse 11 and Titus 2:2. These are its only occurrences. But the verb occurs six times. Twice it is translated *watch* (2 Tim. 4:5; 1 Pet. 4:7), and the other four times, *be sober*.

There's a fairly obvious connection between being sober and being watchful, or vigilant; a person who is not sober is also not alert. But the combination of this word with the next in the passage, which is also translated *sober*, suggests that something other than watchfulness is being called for here. I'll say more about that combination later.

In the first century, the literal use of *nēphalios* referred to not being intoxicated by wine. The person was *sober*. He wasn't inebriated. He wasn't impaired by drink. But the application here is probably much broader. In his second letter to Timothy, Paul urges him to *watch* (to be *sober*) . . . *in all things* (2 Tim. 4:5). That indicates that Paul could use the word figuratively, and that's probably what he's doing in the list of qualifications. Especially since there's another qualification, *not given to wine* (1 Tim. 3:3), that addresses the issue of drunkenness explicitly.

When one considers this figurative application of sobriety to all things, there's a particular nuance to this term that it is critical to understand; the word implies a partaking of things—up to a point! In other words, the qualification isn't total abstinence, but temperance. That means that the things in view are those about which a Christian has a certain amount of liberty, things of which he may partake. But he is not intemperate in his use of them. What does that mean?

C. H. Spurgeon felt that cigar smoking was one of his liberties. But he is reported to have pledged to one critic that if he ever found himself smoking excessively he would quit entirely. What would you call smoking to excess?, the man asked. Why, Spurgeon answered, smoking two cigars at the same time!

When it comes to intemperance, that description wasn't half bad. Just imagine the great preacher with two cigars protruding from his lips! That mental image portrays pretty well the kind of conspicuous, often comical (if its ramifications weren't so serious) overindulgence being addressed.

Men serving as elders or deacons are not to be intemperate. They cannot be men "of two cigars at the same time." If, when their name is mentioned, people who know them well almost immediately think of some obsession, indulgence, imbalanced fascination, or impairing preoccupation, they are not yet qualified for an office that demands sane, sensible mental and emotional balance. No one ought to be saying of an elder, Don't get him started on that subject. . . . He's absolutely fanatical about. . . . Or He's a great guy, just keep him away from. . . .

What are some of the contemporary "intoxicants" in our culture of which a Christian may partake in measure? What would you put on your short list? Secular observers and poll takers now rank social media, television sports, and video games as three of the top timestealers in American culture. Men may be married to their jobs, obsessed with politics and talk radio, addicted to overeating, carried away with inordinately timeconsuming recreations, preoccupied with technology and gadgets. It probably doesn't occur to them that they may be intemperate. But when their people think of them, what mental image pops into their minds? That's a pretty fair test of this qualification.

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What can an intemperate man do in order to recalibrate? That depends entirely upon the man himself and his degree of self-control (which is what the next qualification has reference to). But sometimes, at least for a while, a man may have to go to the extreme opposite end of the spectrum and deny himself completely until he's gotten an obsession entirely out of his life. I know a man who entered the Alcoholics Anonymous program to overcome drunkenness. But it required his confinement day and night to a facility that protected him from any possibility of drinking for several weeks until the liquor was entirely washed out of his system. A professional golfer who was a recovering alcoholic related years ago that he simply could not allow himself a single drink, and that the only way he could stay sober was to say to himself every morning, I will not drink today.

That total abstinence cure is tough to accept when the obsession isn't with something that is actually immoral. But my former homiletics professor used to relate to his classes that as a young preacher he had to give up playing chess entirely for several years. He'd come to the embarrassing conclusion that playing that game was beginning to control his time and his mind. My former pastor had to lay down his violin when he surrendered to the call to preach. The violin had become almost a god during his college years. G. Campbell Morgan told of a day in the life of his father, an English pastor, when he took his long clay pipe out of his mouth and looked at it. "You are becoming my master instead of my servant," he said, and snapping it in pieces he threw it into the fire. For years he never smoked again,8 even though he lived in an age when smoking was not deemed unhealthful or unholy.

Perhaps in many cases entire abstinence isn't necessary. But it may be, and if so, we ought to face it cheerfully for the glory of God. There is no real sacrifice involved in laying down a lawful thing if by doing so we can recommend ourselves as true ministers of Christ. Let's reread 1 Corinthians 9:1–17 and encourage ourselves with the great apostle's example and consolation: If I do this thing willingly, I have a reward.

¹ Edmund Calamy, An Abridgement of Mr. Baxter's History of His Life and Times (1713), I, 23.

² Sermons of M. John Calvin, on the Epistles of S. Paule to Timothie and Titus, "Sermon 21 on I Timothy."

³ R. Kent Hughes, 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit.

⁴ John MacArthur, Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry, "The Character of a Pastor," 90.

⁵ An Introduction to Biblical Ethics, 191.

⁶ Proverbs, 13.

⁷ James Humes, Churchill, Speaker of the Century, 291.

⁸ Jill Morgan, A Man of the Word: Life of G. Campbell Morgan, 23.

Bring . . . the Books

The Downgrade Controversy by Charles H. Spurgeon

Charles Spurgeon first raised the alarm of false teaching in the Baptist Union in the 1870s. When those warnings went largely unheeded, Spurgeon resigned from the Union in October 1887. "As soon as I saw, or thought I saw, that error had become firmly established, I did not deliberate, but quitted the body at once."

Once his necessary departure seemed imminent, he began publishing what became a series of eleven *Sword and Trowel* articles (March 1887–December 1889). *The Downgrade Controversy* is a compilation of these original articles, along with a few other materials and a chapter from Spurgeon's *Autobiography*—all documenting Spurgeon's personal stand against the rise of false teaching within the Baptist Union and elsewhere (including even among some of the graduates of Spurgeon's own Pastors' College). The book can be found electronically on grace-ebooks.com and in paperback from Pilgrim Publications in Pasadena, Texas. Kindle and paperback editions can also be found on Amazon.

Two additional resources are helpful for augmenting Spurgeon's record: (1) Appendix 1 in John MacArthur, Ashamed of the Gospel (Crossway, 1993) and (2) Iain Murray, The Forgotten Spurgeon (Banner of Truth, 1973, 2nd edition), chapters 6–9. These sources piece together the chronology of events that is not obvious in Spurgeon's book and also identify certain events, people, and organizations with which the reader may not be familiar.

Spurgeon's resignation illustrates his conviction that he should separate not only from false teachers but also from good brethren who tolerated error: "Neither when we have chosen our way can we keep company with those who go the other way. There must come with decision for truth a corresponding protest against error." What stunned him was not the rise of false teaching, but the eagerness of so many to avoid any confrontation over it: "Our warning was intended to call attention to an evil which we thought was apparent to all: we never dreamed . . . that a company of esteemed friends would rush in between the combatants, and declare that there was no cause for war." Spurgeon was grieved "that so many good people were contradicting" by denying that these men were false teachers at all.

Spurgeon protests that good preachers were guilty of "a wretched indifferentism" (what he labels "Panindifferentism") which had "brought a deep slumber on those who guard the flocks." (J. Gresham Machen later used the word "indifferentism" to describe the similar response of believers to liberalism among the Presbyterians in the 1920s.) This was Spurgeon's main emphasis and heartbreak in the controversy. The presence of false teachers was not the great crisis. What caused the downgrade was good people doing nothing against the error.

Spurgeon gave his unique wordsmithing gift to

this issue: "But commonly it is found in theology that that which is true is not new, and that which is new is not true.

. . . Decision is the virtue of the hour. . . . To pursue union at the expense of truth is treason to the Lord Jesus. . . . Fellowship with known and

"... when thou comest, bring with thee ... the books" (2 Tim. 4:13)

vital error is participation in sin." The strategy of false teachers is "to borrow the Christian name, and effect a settlement within Christian territory."

At the same time, Spurgeon was careful to combine a correct stand with a correct spirit: "With steadfast faith let us take our places; not in anger, not in the spirit of suspicion or division, but in watchfulness and resolve." His letter to an evangelical who remained in the Baptist Union, was very gracious: "If I think you wrong in your course—as I surely do—I will tell you so in the same spirit as that in which you have written to me." This courtesy permeates his writing throughout.

When his Baptist brethren asked, "What shall we do?" Spurgeon's advice was generally for them to resign from the Union; those who stayed he urged to continue to speak out against the error or to form a new Union. He said in 1888, "Since [my own resignation] my one counsel has been 'Come out from among them." But this was not as clear at the beginning as it became later. One year earlier he had said, "We trust that if they remain, they will resolve that reform will be carried out, and truth vindicated."

In November 1887 Spurgeon gave five reasons for not forming a new denomination after separating from the Union: "In the isolation of independency, tempered by the love of the Spirit which binds us to all the faithful in Christ Jesus, we think the lovers of the gospel will for the present find their immediate safety."

Spurgeon's personal record of the Downgrade Controversy is valuable for several reasons. First, it is the testimony of a pastor's faithfulness to God despite great cost. When threatened with a diminished income, Spurgeon replied in the words of his predecessor, John Gill, "I can afford to be poor, but I cannot afford to injure my conscience." Second, it is instructive to trace the various downgrades beginning with the rise of Nonconformity in seventeenth-century Britain through Spurgeon's battle in the late nineteenth century, and continuing across the Atlantic in the twentieth century. The response of godly brethren was remarkably similar, in spite of the warnings of history. Finally, the book provides a historical framework in which to understand our present-day downgrades and form a correct response to them.

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Straight Cuts

Temptation and Testing in the Experience of Christ

God cannot be tempted with evil (James 1:13).

Jesus the Son of God... was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:14, 15).

Two passages of Scripture seem to be in conflict on the subject of the impeccability of Christ. The weaknesses of the flesh and the bent to sin are so much a part of our existence that it is hard for us to imagine being human without them. And there is the conflict. In the incarnation, Jesus lacked absolutely nothing in His deity or in His humanity. He is everything that is essential to be human and He is also fully God. So how could He be human, with its sinful frailties, and be God?

First, we falsely assume that sinful frailties are essential aspects of real humanity. Jesus was not born with a sin nature, and a sin nature is not an essential aspect of humanity. It is a universal aspect of humanity today, but it has not always been so. When Adam and Eve were created, they were, by God's own evaluation, "very good." They were not created sinners and did not have the same bent to sin that we now have. They still chose to sin and in doing so condemned us all to the corruption of body and soul that we now endure.

Jesus was born of a woman, but He was also conceived in the womb of Mary by means of the Holy Spirit. He was "without sin" in every aspect, as Hebrews says. He was not a sinner by nature or by choice.

So, could Jesus sin? The answer has to be no. For Him to do so would be to violate His own divine nature. He cannot choose not to be Himself.

But if He could not sin, the temptation could not be real, could it? The solution to that dilemma is found in the Greek word *peirazo*. It is translated a number of ways in the New Testament, but most often in the KJV it is translated "to tempt" (as in Heb. 4:15). Our common understanding of the word "tempt" is to be drawn by our own evil desires. It describes an inner battle with our sinful self. This understanding of temptation presumes a certain level of sinfulness on our part or there would be no temptation at all. But the same word is used in James 1 instructing believers to count falling into various temptations a joy. James would not have wanted them to count sinful frailty a joy. He wanted them to count various difficult experiences as joyful opportunities for true spiritual growth.

It is better to understand the word as "tested" rather than "tempted." In the KJV the word is translated "tempt" twenty-nine times, but it is also translated "try," "prove," "assay," and "examine." Each con-

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text conveys its own nuance, but the general idea of testing is evident in every occurrence. Testing is not evil nor even necessarily being drawn to evil. It only becomes evil when our sinful natures (in combination with conscious choices) make it

"Rightly dividing the Word of Truth" (2 Tim. 2:15)

so. In fact, this idea of testing is something that God often does with believers as He prepares them for greater service. God "tested" Abraham (Heb. 11:17, 37). This is no accusation of sin, or being drawn to sin on Abraham's part. This was a test, but it did not become temptation in the sense we normally understand temptation.

Paul uses the imperative form of the word in 2 Corinthians 13:5 when he commands believers to "examine" themselves regarding the reality of their faith. Paul is not expecting that believers tempt themselves to sin but rather put themselves to the test so that the reality of their faith might be revealed.

When James 1:13, 14 says that "every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed," James is not saying that all temptation (or testing) is associated with sin. He is saying that dealing with the impulses of our own sin nature is one of the tests that we face and the fault for that is ours and not God's

So Hebrews 4 is not saying that Jesus had been drawn toward sin by a sinful nature, or even that He could have sinned, but rather that He endured all of the same experiences that any human being faces. He faced every form of human testing in a real human body with all of its limitations. He was sinned against, mistreated, suffered loss and pain. He was attacked physically and spiritually. He felt what we feel. And in all these situations He proved His deity and moral perfection. He was perfect in motive, thought, and deed. So, was the testing real? Absolutely so! His experiences were the same as those of other human beings. In that very real sense He understands us and has compassion on us. But He is also different from every other human. He was and is sinless.

Our present comfort is that He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Our great hope is that one day we will be delivered from those infirmities. It is the confidence that in that day when Jesus comes to receive His own, we will be delivered from the inner wars and corruption that define our present existence. We now have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us. We do not have to sin. But then the draw of sin will be eradicated completely. He became man for us so that one day we can become like Him. Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus!

Windows
Honoring Parents

The principle of honoring parents is as old as man himself. God showed how important it is when He placed it in the foundational structure for proper societal function called the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:12). Not only is this tenet a part of the Ten Commandments, it tops the second table.

Every so often a generation comes along that does not think honoring parents is important. This generation forgets that the principle affects a great deal of life itself. Blessing is to those who keep this command and negative consequences accompany those who neglect its adherence.

There is some debate as to whether the last phrase in Exodus 20:12 ("that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee") refers to society as a whole or to just the individual. Perhaps God wanted everyone to make this a consideration with the results affecting not just the individual but the whole society. There are three areas where this command directly touches life.

Family

Compliance or neglect of this principle will impact the family. The main import of the instruction deals with the family. Since the family is the first unit of ordered human interaction, it is natural that this instruction would apply to the family first.

Life is always changing, and as one progresses through life his relationship to the principle will change too. Below are seven different stages of life and the way in which this principle relates to each phase. These stages are not definitive and some overlap may occur; still, the division shows how the principle can be applied differently throughout life.

1. The first phase of life is being a child and under the direct tutelage of the parents. Honor in this station of life would be best summed up by the word "obedience." Cheerfully, immediately obeying reflects the proper honor due to parents.

Amy was perplexed by the concern on her father's face. She had often seen him with a gun, so it was not unusual to see him coming out of the house with his rifle. Since their family had come to Africa as missionaries three years ago, Amy had discovered many strange and dangerous animals. She loved the ministry and loved her parents.

But today complying was particularly difficult because her father had called for her to be perfectly still where she sat on the ground. She loved obeying her parents because she knew that obeying them pleased God. But when she looked at her father he was pointing the rifle at her. Every fiber of her body told her to bolt and run. Something was terribly wrong. But she trusted her father and wanted to honor him, so she sat perfectly still. When the shot rang out Amy ran to her father to ask why he was shooting at her. It was then that she realized a poisonous snake had slithered up behind her. Had she moved quickly she could have startled the snake, causing possible harm

"To every preacher of righteousness as well as to Noah, wisdom gives the command, 'A window shalt thou make in the ark.'"

Charles Spurgeon

or even death to herself. She was glad she honored her father by obeying him.

2. The second stage in life is that of being a young adult in the late teens to early twenties. Honor during this phase of life is be best demonstrated by *listening*. God naturally places in mankind a desire for independence so that he will be able to function on his own someday. But that desire does not override God's instruction to honor parents. Maturity in young adults is demonstrated by their willingness to listen to parents during this time of life. God is pleased when honor toward parents is taken seriously by young adults.

Jason wanted to go to a local secular college for an engineering degree. His father and mother advised him to pray about going to a Christian university for at least one year to get a Biblical foundation for serving God through an occupation. Although it was not what he wanted to do, Jason listened to his parents. At the Christian school God opened his eyes to the ministry opportunities through his training. Jason stayed for the completion of his degree. He not only learned a valuable skill, he also learned spiritual lessons that would help him in life. Listening to his parents gave him a perspective on life that he would have missed otherwise.

3. The third stage of life (usually) is marriage. Honoring parents does not end when one has established his own home. The relationship changes now, and the individual is not under the obligation to obey any more. In fact, the Lord's instruction in Matthew 19:5 is to leave father and mother and cleave to the wife. This would imply that it is no longer a requirement to obey parents now. A new family is established directly responsible to God.

Honoring parents at this juncture could be demonstrated by *asking* them for advice. Asking does not mean you are obligated to do what you hear, but it is letting the parents know that you value their opinion. A godly parent will abstain from giving any instruction to the new couple unless asked directly. Even

then it is up to the new couple to decide what they will do with the information.

Since Pete and Sarah married six months ago, they diligently sought to honor both of their parents. Pete would ask his father and father-in-law for advice on how to make the funds stretch. He would engage his father in religious topics because he knew this was the passion of his father's life. Sarah would ask her mother and mother-in-law for recipes and for decorating advice. They did not always follow every nuance of their parents' specific tastes, but each set of parents knew that Pete and Sarah wanted them to be involved in their lives.

4. Stage number four is when a young couple has children. Honoring parents during this time of life would be best demonstrated by *speaking*. Communicate often with parents and share with them what is going on in your world. Perhaps this is the means of providing the greatest joy to parents when they know that you will take the time to let them know what your life is like. Share experiences with childrearing, both its joys and trials. Wise parents will refrain from giving any advice unless it is specifically requested.

Tom loved and respected his father. Since he had children he had made it a policy to share with his father some experiences he had with his own children. Often he would tell his father, "I see now why you did what you did when I was a small boy." Tom's father often tells others how much he appreciates the honor his son gives to him.

5. Having no children at home would be the next phase of life. This can be a very busy time with the vocation, and often grandchildren begin appearing on the scene. Still, honoring parents needs to be a priority. Honor may be best shown by keeping in *contact* with the parents.

Mike and Mary have seven grandchildren. Neither of their children lives close to them. Yet even with the pull to see the kids they make a special trip to see each set of parents several times a year. They have determined to honor their parents by keeping in contact with them.

6. Having aging parents is another stage of life. Any one or all of the parents could be getting to the point where they need help for daily life functions. One of the best ways to honor parents during this time is to be *available* to your parents. Decisions may need to be made to protect them. Sacrifice may be a real part of the honor shown to parents at this time.

A couple of years ago Nate's parents moved into town to be close to family. As his parents become older Nate spends more time stopping in to visit. They know that if there is a need, Nate will be there to help them with it.

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7. Being an aging parent yourself is the final stage of life. Even though your parents are already deceased you can honor them by *trusting* your children to care for you.

Change has never been an exciting thing, and as the years move along it becomes more burdensome. Bob and Emily's children, however, have been encouraging them to move close. After talking it over Bob and Emily determined that it would be easier for them to make this change than for their children to have to worry about their care. With much prayer and consideration the decision was made to begin trusting the children to care for their needs.

Society

Another area of life affected by honoring the parents is society itself. God gave this instruction for the good of family and society. Cultures that honor parents have remained consistent for many centuries.

The Chinese culture has been around for thousands of years. Honor of parents is embedded in their way of life. Although it is taken too far into animism, honoring those who are older has made change slow and deliberate.

A culture that begins to honor the youth instead of the parents will embrace change easily and deteriorate rapidly. Knowing that this would happen, God gave the instruction to exalt the parents, not the youth.

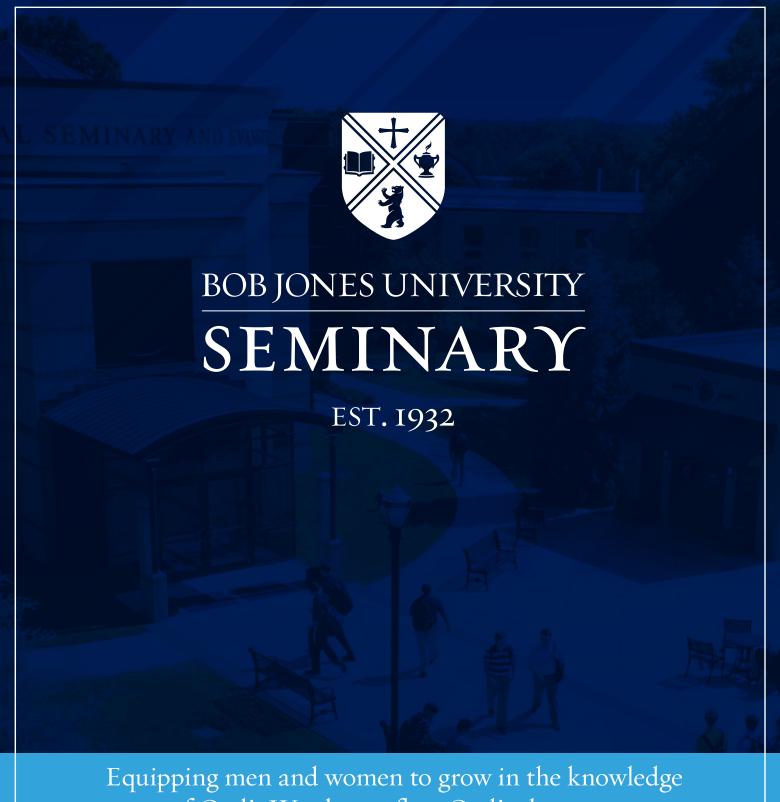
Political campaigns today seem to appeal primarily to the youth. It is no coincidence that the culture around is changing very rapidly. When the culture caters to the youth, the older generation is not honored. Things do not go well for that generation.

Church

The final area of life influenced by this principle of honoring parents is the church. When the church honors the fathers there will be long deliberation over changes. Just because a teaching or position is held by the fathers does not make it always appropriate, but honoring the fathers will cause great care to be taken when changing what has been established as a tenet or standard. When the youth are honored, the older are often neglected or disrespected.

Grace Baptist Church changed its music choices when a new pastor was hired. This young man told the senior members of the congregation that he believed the Lord wanted him to take the church in the contemporary direction and that if they did not like it they could go to another church. These senior members had been in the church for many decades only to be pushed aside to appease the youth.

God has a reason for His instruction to honor parents. He wants a person, family, society, and church to be blessed. God knows what happens when this principle is not followed. Honoring parents is just as important today as it has always been.



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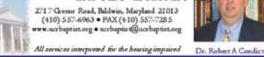
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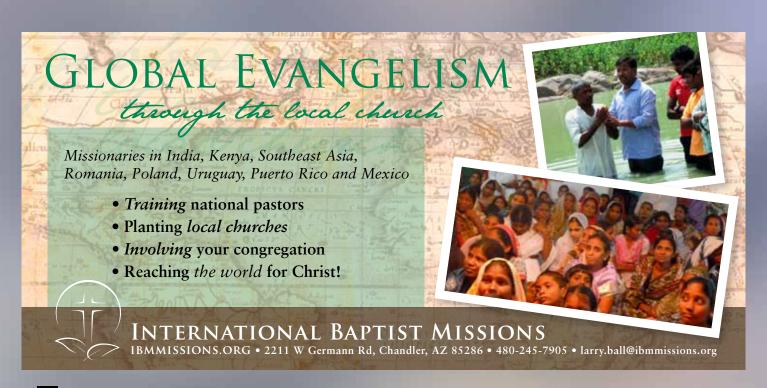


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Fifty-six percent of ministers in training reject the doctrine of the Virgin Birth.

Redbook magazine, August 1961

The seed of the woman . . . has its ultimate and deepest meaning in that it refers to the Virgin Mary and her -Karlheinz Rabast Seed, Christ.

The hardest sign God could give that was relevant to the occasion was a true biological impossibility—the miraculous conception of a son by a woman who was a virgin in the biological sense of the word.

-Richard Niessen

The virgin is pregnant! How can she still be a virgin and be pregnant at the same time? The implication is that this child is to be miraculously born without a father and despite the pregnancy, the mother is still considered to be a virgin. -Edward Hindson

Jesus insisted that He was not begotten of Joseph but was begotten of God. Twice He referred to Himself as *monogenes*, the only-begotten of God. John 3:16 and 18. -John R. Rice

When we find [Ignatius] attesting the virgin birth not as a novelty but altogether as a matter of course, as one of the accepted facts about Christ, it becomes evident that the belief in the virgin birth must have been prevalent long before the close of the first century.

—J. Gresham Machen

All the evidence there is goes to prove the miraculous birth of Christ. -Clement Rogers Our Teacher Jesus Christ was not born as a result of sexual relations. . . . The power of God descending upon the virgin overshadowed her, and caused her, while still a virgin, to conceive. —Justin Martyr, AD 150

When Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I AM," He was making a claim that requires the Virgin Birth. John 8:58. -Clinton N. Howard

Everything that we know of the dogmatics of the early part of the second century agrees with the belief that at that period the virginity of Mary was a part of the formulated Christian belief. Aristides

The early Jewish allusions to the supposed illegitimacy of Christ (before AD 70) demonstrate that there was doubt as to His parentage. This is evidence that the very early Christian church, at most forty years after His death, must have been teaching something unusual about His birth—namely, that He was born of a virgin.

-Josh McDowell

The Virgin Birth is . . . the only type of birth consistent with the character and mission of Jesus Christ.

-Henry Morris

Those who deny the Virgin Birth . . . have not yet discovered the father or mother of Adam.

-Clinton N. Howard

In Mark 6:3 it is as if Mark is taking pains to avoid referring to Jesus as the son of Joseph.

—Millard Erickson

Compiled by Dr. David Atkinson, pastor of Dyer Baptist Church, Dyer, Indiana.



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What's "Fundamental" to "Fundamentalism"?

The Genius of Apostasy, Part Two

We continue with the remaining two significant obstacles that stand in the way of identifying and fighting apostasy in its beginning stages, the first having been gradualism.

Second, there is *the good*. In its initial stages, apostasy has so much "good" to commend it and so little evil to condemn it. Those who stand in opposition to apostasy at this point in time are very vulnerable to the accusation that they are opposed to all of the "good" that is associated with it. We should be reminded that most heresy is mainly truth mixed with just a little error. It is the presence of the truth that makes it possible to sell the error along with it.

Lessons from Jehoshaphat and Moses

King Jehoshaphat is a classic example of an outstanding-ly *good* king who himself sowed the seeds of the destruction of everything he held dear. This king was one of the most godly to reign in the history of the southern kingdom of Judah. Yet through his alliances with the wicked King Ahab he personally put in place the mainstreaming of Baalism into his own kingdom, which became a reality within twelve years of his death. The lesson: good and godly men can by their disobedience to the Scriptures and compromise do untold historical harm and damage to the cause of Christ. The good becomes a cover for the evil that is strengthened and enhanced by the accommodation of that evil.

At Kadesh, Moses, in an act of blatant disobedience, *smote* the rock rather than *speaking to* the rock. The results certainly were very "good"—water poured forth in abundance, and the congregation had all that they needed. But God charged Moses with both unbelief and a failure to honor His divine integrity. As a result Moses was denied the blessing of taking His people into the promised land.

All of the "good" results in the world do not justify ignoring or compromising the clear teachings and commands of Scripture! We are not called to succeed! We are called to work hard and to be faithful. The results of our labors are God's business, not ours!

Third and finally, we meet the gurus—the greater-than-

life personalities who seem to be so *successful* in that which they are doing. "If these men are doing it, then it must be right."

Not so! Our point of reference for life and ministry is not men but the Word of God! We need to be reminded that Fundamentalism is not about success or popularity. It is about Biblical integrity in life and ministry. We also need to be reminded that "success" has destroyed Compromise may give an initial boost to the numbers but in the end will result in a watered-down, powerless ministry.

more men and ministries than "failure" and "hardship" ever have.

Stumbling Blocks That Deceive Good Men

Outward appearances can be very deceitful! Initial success does not ensure success on the long haul. Compromise may give an initial boost to the numbers but in the end will result in a watered-down, powerless ministry. Dr. Bob Jones Sr. had it right: "It is not good to sacrifice the permanent on the altar of the immediate."

There is danger in confusing high-powered methods and promotion with the genuine power and work of the Holy Spirit. Men in the megachurch world who supposedly had reached thousands have had to confess to their dismay that in the end they found that they had little more than "fluff." Their ministries produced *consumers* rather than *disciples*.

In their pursuit of "success," God's people, for the most part, have an aversion or unwillingness to separate from compromise or apostasy, even when clear Biblical principles are at stake. We must remember that the Holy Spirit of God never leads anyone to do anything that is contrary to His Word. To lead a congregation to a Biblical practice of personal and ecclesiastical separation takes time, patience, wisdom, and a willingness to be misunderstood. Nevertheless, it is the right and most benevolent thing to do. Yet many are not willing to pay this price.

Then there are the unsaved and compromising "Sanballats" who find personal fulfillment in sharing in the *success* of our ministry. These can be very prominent and important individuals. Saying no to these people can be difficult and unsavory, whether they are from within our congregations or from without.

If one is to maintain Biblical integrity in his ministry, he will find it necessary at times to take unpopular stands—unpopular, because others who should take the same stand are unwilling to pay the price to do so, making him look as though he is the only one with such concerns. Here we are faced with the silence of the majority of preachers who stand by and say nothing. During Elijah's day there were seven

thousand prophets in hiding, making it appear as if there was only one prophet who had not bowed the knee to Baal. It is embarrassing to stand alone when you know that many others profess to believe and fully embrace that which you do but are unwilling to "take the heat."

Dr. David C. Innes has served as senior pastor of Hamilton Square Baptist Church in San Francisco, California, since January of 1977.





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AT A GLANCE

Written and Compiled by Dr. Layton Talbert

THE KINGDOM OF GOD: A SHORT VERSION

God has chosen to describe reality and tell its story in terms of a kingdom. That story begins in Genesis and culminates in Revelation. The divine purpose, fulfilled in all these past and future events, can be mapped out under the overarching Biblical theme of *the kingdom of God*. Many more passages factor into this concept than space permits to include, so we will hit only some of the high points of the Bible's focus on God's kingdom plans and purposes.

Gospels

The Gospels announce the arrival of God's King, the Messiah. Matthew introduces itself as "the book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David" (1:1). Gentile magi come asking "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" (2:1, 2). John the Baptist announces the arrival of the kingdom: "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (3:2)—a theme Jesus Himself takes up (4:17). Early on, Jesus discourses authoritatively on the nature of the kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount, instructing His followers to pray "Thy kingdom come" (6:10) and exhorting them to seek first the kingdom of God (6:33). Jesus tells a number of parables about what "the kingdom of heaven is like" (13:24, 31, 33, 34, etc.). Jesus taught that the kingdom was part of God's plan from the beginning: "inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34). In the end, Jesus the King is rejected and crucified publicly as "the King of the Jews" (a phrase that appears three times in Matthew 27, with "King of Israel" making a fourth). Yet Jesus rises to affirm that universal authority had been granted to Him (28:18). The announcement is meant to remind you of Daniel 7 (a key OT passage on the kingdom), but only the first movement of the events described in that passage.

Acts

Luke tells us that over the forty days of His post-resurrection ministry Christ was speaking about the **kingdom** of God (Acts 1:3). That's why the disciples asked Him whether the time had come to "restore . . . the **kingdom** to Israel" (1:6). So is Christ a present King or a coming King? Has the kingdom arrived (as Jesus preached in the Gospels), or is it still coming (as the disciples seem to assume)? The most thoroughly Biblical answer is "yes." The rest of the Book of Acts is a record of apostolic testimony not only to the death and resurrection of Christ but to the kingdom of Christ (Acts 20:25; 28:23; 28:31). What exactly did that kingdom preaching sound like? We have

no express samples of it in Acts, but we do have examples in the epistles that Paul was writing concurrently with the events recorded in Acts.

Epistles

The unrighteous, Paul writes, will not inherit the **kingdom** of God (1 Cor. 6:9–11) unless they become righteous. Paul's preaching and writing (e.g., Romans, written after 1 Corinthians) explains how that can occur. When sinners are converted, we are liberated from "the **power** [authority] of darkness" and transferred into "the **kingdom**" of Christ (Col. 1:13), and we await the return of "the **King** of kings" (1 Tim. 6:15).

One of the most important kingdom passages is Hebrews 2. It is the NT's most concise explanation of the connection between what God intended in Genesis 1-2, what happened in Genesis 3, and how God intends to fix it through Daniel 7. Not only is Christ superior to prophets and angels because He is a Son (Heb. 1), but He is also superior to angels because He is a man (Heb. 2). How does that make Him superior to angels? Because God granted dominion over all creation to man, not to angels (Heb. 2:5; cf. Ps. 8:6; 115:16; Matt. 25:34). When man fell, he marred his ability to exercise righteous dominion over this world that God had ceded to him. Because of the Fall, that righteous dominion was relegated to a future "world to come" (2:5). That right can be reclaimed only by a man. The writer's primary point in citing Psalm 8 (Heb. 2:6-8) is not about Christ but about man in comparison to angels; indeed, Psalm 8 would never apply to Christ if He had not become man. But because He did, 2:6-8 can be applied to Christ in 2:9. In other words, initially Psalm 8 is designed to make a point about man; by extension, it proceeds to make a point about Christ as man and *because* He is man. Becoming man gave Him the capacity to fulfill a destiny uniquely given to (but lost by) man. "Redemption" is not about God's trashing what He lost to sin and Satan and starting over with something new; that's admitting defeat to His original purposes. Redemption is God's means of victory over sin and Satan, a testimony to the triumph of the glory of God and the invincibility of His purposes; that's why the kingdom revolves around accomplishing what He intended for both man and this world.

When, exactly, is this "world to come" to come? Where is this future kingdom actually described as finally coming? God gave us one more book to answer that question.

OF A LONG STORY (PART 2, NEW TESTAMENT)

Revelation

Psalm 2 and Daniel 7 (along with multitudes of other smaller passages) prepare us to understand that the eschaton unveiled in Revelation is about cosmological conquest, redemption, and rule. It's about a kingdom reality finally and fully and infallibly reasserted and established.

On the threshold of unveiling the fiercest fulfillment of God's kingdom claims, John was first ushered into the presence of "a throne . . . in heaven" (4:1, 2). The word "throne" is kingdom language; there is a message in this image. This passage reorients us to a central reality: there is a throne in heaven, God is on it, and from there He holds absolute sway over all creation. But He has sworn and bequeathed this earth to His Son. (Remember Psalm 2—"Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.") Satan is a squatter, a pretender who has posted his petty little potentates here and there—little men who are kinging and lording, all the time thinking they're in charge. Revelation 4–5 informs us that they are in for a serious reality check.

The transfer of the scroll from the One seated on the throne to the Lion/Lamb (Rev. 5:1–9) portrays the transfer of authority over the earth—including the right to judge it—from the Father to the Son. Everything that flows from this throne-vision and scroll-granting in Revelation 6–20 is the final realization of all the dominion promises ever made (e.g., Gen. 3, 12, 13, 17, 49; Pss. 2, 8, 110; Dan. 2, 7; Isa. 2, 9, 11, etc.).

Even though Revelation contains not a single formal OT quotation, John's prophecy is drenched in OT language (cf. Rev. 11:15 and Ps. 2:2, 6; Rev. 12:5 and Ps. 2:9). The "horn" in Daniel 7 who speaks pompous words and terrorizes the saints of the Most High shows up as a "beast" in Revelation who speaks "great . . . blasphemies" (13:5, 6) and is allowed "to make war with the saints, and to overcome them" (13:7). Allowed by whom? Who does that indicate is really in charge, even at the nadir of human history for the people of God?

Chapters 17 and 18 describe the ultimate confederation of human kingdoms in the form of a gaudy whore "drunken with the blood of the saints" riding on a great beast. Her name? "Babylon the Great." The beast she rides has ten horns, which are "ten **kings**" (17:12; cf. Dan. 7:24); but she's abruptly destroyed, followed by

the sudden arrival of the true "**King** of kings" (19:11–16, another passage that drips with OT language). He commences His final reign over this earth (20:1–6), followed by a final challenge to His rule (20:7–10), followed by the final judgment (20:11–15). At last, "he that sat upon the **throne** said, Behold, I make all things new" (21:5). Even the eternal continuation of that kingdom reign still features a "**throne**" (22:1, 3). A relentless kingdom motif persists right up to the very end: "I am the root and the offspring of **David**" (22:16). John's closing prayer (22:20) is an echo of the request Jesus taught him to pray: "thy **kingdom** come."

Conclusion

The Biblical concept of the kingdom of God over this earth is not just a *theological* concept—it is a *Christological* concept. The Ruler of this kingdom is not God generally but Christ explicitly. The Reign over this kingdom is exercised not indirectly by the Father but by the Son of Man directly. The Realm of this kingdom is this earth and all its kingdoms, under the universal rule of God; that's why 1 Corinthians 15 describes Christ, after His reign, delivering up the kingdom to God the Father, that God may be all in all.

God became Man in Christ not only to enable Him to die but to qualify Him to reign. The Creator became a creature—with all the humiliation and suffering and self-sacrifice that entailed—to recapture and restore all that we fallen creatures had lost. Christ, having conquered all and achieved conquest and dominion over creation, will then share the dominion He has won—by both divine grant and human conquest—with His people as fellow partakers in the original decree of dominion. So this creation-kingdom, given to man but marred by the Fall, is rescued and redeemed and returned to man through God's anointed King (Ps. 2), His Son, the God-Man.

The Bible is the story of the Great King who bequeathed a kingdom to a race created in His own image, how that race rebelled against the King, and what He is doing to bring that race back to Himself and return the kingdom to the race through the self-sacrificial and conquering reign of His own Son. That's the Big Picture storyline of the Bible. That means everything you read in Scripture fits into and contributes toward that storyline in some way. Just being aware that is there *is* a Bigger Picture is important for how you read and understand the Bible.

and brotherly love in these last days.

Jonathan Musch Brighton, Michigan

Editor's Note: Although FrontLine does not normally publish anonymous letters, the following excerpt is worthy of an exception so that other readers who support the anonymous author's plea may have a voice.

ohn C. Vaughn wrote, "Generally, our [the FBFI's] reasons for using the KJV are practical." Nevertheless, he reminds the readers that "we do not prohibit the mention of other translations nor prescribe a particular translation to individuals or churches." Therefore, without making a prescription, which involves force, I make a plea for the King James Bible to be selected above the modern versions of the Bible. Readers of FrontLine magazine should know that the "practical" reasons for selecting the King James Bible are well-supported for the following reasons: [First], we should all speak the same thing [according to] 1 Corinthians 1:10. [Second], taking note that the Greek Received Text

differs materially from the Greek Critical Text, a selection for authoritative use is necessitated. [Third], in the special providence of God, the text of the King James Version has been kept pure, according to many reliable judgments.

Editor's Note: Mail Bag is a forum for readers to submit letters to the editor. Many responses to the September/ October issue titled "Whither from Here?" appeared on various blogs, including our own, Proclaim and Defend. Among them were questions about why FrontLine brought up this subject now when it has been settled for so many for so long, and why certain very capable authors' articles were not included.

As we stated in the introductory article, the timing of the issue was related to "a season of relative calm on the textual debate." Also, we held in reserve a lengthy, excellent article by Dr. Hantz Bernard, which we did not have room to print. In brief, we serve under the limitations of human schedules and available space for articles, but we do anticipate a follow-up issue on the subject to offer another "compact presentation of relevant material," as willing authors respond.

Visit our companion website:

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"God Is Not a Divine Being"?

While the words above were no doubt not intended to be taken literally, the statement is shocking nonetheless. Pope Francis made the statement when he was addressing those gathered at the Pontifical Academy of Science in a ceremony designed to honor his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI. "God is not a divine being or a magician, but the Creator who brought everything to life. . . . Evolution in nature is not inconsistent with the notion of creation, because evolution requires the creation of beings that evolve."

Papal support for evolution is nothing new. In 1950 Pope Pius XII admitted the full alignment of Catholic doctrine and evolution. Pope John Paul II fully endorsed those words. Benedict was not as overt in his agreement with evolution. But Pope Francis's statements are unambiguous.

"When we read about Creation in Genesis, we run the risk of imagining God was a magician, with a magic wand able to do everything . . . but that is not so. . . . He created human beings and let them develop according to the internal laws that He gave to each one so they would reach their fulfillment."

The article goes on to quote a June Gallup poll that indicated that 42% of Americans believe God created man in his present form. Only 19% do not believe that God was involved in the process at all. And 31%

believe that God used some sort of evolutionary process to create man.

This article can be accessed at http://www.onenewsnow.com/church/2014/11/03/pope-backs-evolution-vatican-calls-creation-blasphemous'#.VFz_YlfNqJU.

Winds of Change

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has sent mixed messages regarding the convention's stand on issues surrounding homosexuality.

The convention recently hosted a three-day meeting sponsored by the SBC's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC). During the conference Dr. Albert Mohler, president of Southern **Baptist Theological** Seminary, addressed the audience, stating that he was wrong when he previously believed that samesex attraction could be changed. Russell Moore, director of the ERLC, stated that Southern Baptists no longer support "reparative therapy" and that he does not believe that "people can necessarily change same-sex attraction."

Regarding marriage, however, conference speakers backed the Biblical view of marriage and insisted that that view would not change.

This article can be accessed at http://www.onenewsnow.com/church/2014/10/30/where-are-southern-baptist-leaders-headed-re-homosexuality#.VGT1hk3wvak.

UMC Doublespeak

The Judicial Council of the United Methodist Church (equivalent to the church's "supreme court") affirmed the reinstatement of previously defrocked pastor, Frank Schaeffer. His defrocking resulted from his performance of a samesex union service.

On one hand, the Judicial Council did not give permission for United Methodist Clergy to perform same-sex unions or even to host them on UM properties. These things are still a violation of UM church law.

On the other, they denied that church councils had the authority to judge or punish Schaeffer by defrocking him.

Meanwhile, Schaeffer continues with no regret.

This article can be accessed at http://www.onenewsnow.com/church/2014/10/27/observer-verdict-in-umc-case-underminestrust-in-bishops#.VF0EtofNqJU.

Understanding the Enemy

Dr. Sebastian Gorka has devoted his life to the study of Islamists. In a lecture designed to help the military be more prepared to confront the enemy, he described the following guidelines: (1) read what they say; (2) see al-Qaeda not as a recent invention of Osama bin Laden but rather as something that proceeded out of the Muslim Brotherhood long before; and (3) stop obsessing over the violent aspects of jihad, but instead (4) wake up to the soft tactics of jihad.

In his lecture he explained Jahiliyyah—the state of pagan disbelief. He then quoted from Egyptian writer Sayyid Qtub, a leader of the Muslim Brotherhood: "Today, Islam suffers from Jahiliyyah, from confusion,

and from not understanding the oneness of Allah—that he is supreme—and it is the job of all true Muslims to remove the pagan state of ignorance from not only the Middle East but the whole world."

Gorka went on to summarize the works of certain prominent Muslims that explain their thinking: *The Defense of Muslim Lands, Knights under the Prophet's Banner, The Quranic Concept of War,* and *His Own Words.*

This article can be accessed at "Understanding the Enemy," *Special Warfare*, April–June 2014, pages 8–11 (http://www.soc.mil/swcs/swmag/archive/SW2702/APR-JUN_2014.pdf).

Same-Sex Marriage: Supreme Court Issue?

In a two-to-one vote, a Federal Appeals Court overturned the decision of four lower courts in Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, and Tennessee, indicating that states do have the right to ban same-sex marriage. It is believed that this ruling will force the US Supreme Court to rule on the issue. While it is only postulated at this point, it is possible that the justices could be hearing arguments and ruling on this issue by next summer.

Lyle Denniston, reporter for SCOTUSblog, stated, "Now there is a split, and it is a stark one. In one sweeping decision, the Sixth Circuit has given all of the states in its geographic region a victory for their bans on both initial marriages of same-sex couples and official recognition of such marriages performed outside of the couples' home states. By contrast,

other federal courts have nullified identical bans in thirteen states just over the past few months, with the prospect that the number would soon rise to sixteen—for a total of thirty-five states, plus Washington, D.C., allowing such marriages."

Read more at http://www.christian-post.com/news/fed-appeals-court-upholds-right-of-states-to-ban-same-sex-marriage-supreme-court-can-no-longer-ignore-issue-says-russell-moore-129273/.

Dismissed

A British Red Cross volunteer was dismissed from his position for voicing opposition to gay marriage.

Ryan Barkley, age 71, has served the Red Cross for twenty years. But earlier this year he attended a protest outside the Wakefield Cathedral. The protest took place the day after Parliament legalized same-sex marriages. Barkley broke no laws. He simply held a sign that said, "No Same Sex Marriage."

When interviewed, Barkley commented, "What have I done wrong? I passionately believe that the institution of marriage is between a man and a woman and is the cornerstone of our society. Why is it wrong to say so in public? Freedom of expression is being stifled in this country. I have nothing against homosexuals. But I don't believe Parliament was representing the views of the people when it changed the definition of marriage."

Barkley is appealing his dismissal.

This article can be accessed at http://www.christianheadlines.com/blog/red-cross-volunteer-dismissed-for-voicing-views-on-biblical-marriage.html.

UK Court Allows Euthanasia

With all the voices that encourage death with dignity, this story seems to have missed

NOTABLE QUOTES

ou ask me what I shall do if I am called by the emperor. I will go even if I am too sick to stand on my feet. If Caesar calls me, God calls me. If violence is used, as well it may be, I commend my cause to God. He lives and reigns who saved the three youths from the fiery furnace of the king of Babylon, and if He will not save me, my head is worth nothing compared with Christ. This is no time to think of safety. I must take care that the gospel is not brought into contempt by our fear to confess and seal our teaching with our blood."—Martin Luther

personal praise is sweet unto God, but congregational praise has the multiplicity of sweetness in it.—C. H. Spurgeon

without private and congregational worship, a believer will not worship God with his lifestyle. If believers do not worship God throughout the week privately and with their lives, congregational worship will be dead and meaningless. If a Christian isn't consistently faithful in congregational worship, he will not worship the Lord in other areas.—Scott Aniol

hat happens to a culture that is clueless about what is true, good, and just? Pilate answered that question when he declared: "I have the power to crucify you or set you free." When we believe truth is unknowable, we rob it of any authority. What is left is brute power wielding arbitrary force. Whether a person or an ethnic minority is guilty or innocent becomes irrelevant. His or her right to life depends on the whims of whoever has power. Any nation that refuses to live under truth condemns itself to live under sinful man.—Vishal Mangalwadi

Glory follows afflictions, not as the day follows the night but as the spring follows the winter; for the winter prepares the earth for the spring, so do afflictions sanctified prepare the soul for glory.—Richard Sibbes

any a man's knowledge is a torch to light him to hell. Thou who hast knowledge of God's will, but doth not do it, wherein dost thou excel the devil, "who transforms himself into an angel of light.—Thomas Watson

man may be theologically knowing and spiritually ignorant.—Stephen Charnock

the coverage that it deserves. The United Kingdom High Court issued a decision that allowed Charlotte Fitzmaurice Wise to legally euthanize her twelve-year-old daughter.

The child in this story, Nancy, had suffered with several non-life-threatening disabilities for her entire life: hydrocephalus, meningitis, and septicemia. She could not see, talk, walk, eat, or drink on her own. Her condition required that her mother leave her nursing job to provide the care necessary to sustain Nancy's life. Once morphine seemed to stop helping Nancy with her pain, Charlotte petitioned the court and was granted the right to euthanize her child because Nancy supposedly had no quality of life. As a result, doctors stopped supplying Nancy's nutrition, leading to her death.

For the first time a child has been euthanized because the child had no "quality of life."

Joni Eareckson Tada, wellknown Christian author who is a quadriplegic, reacted strongly to the decision: "The judge's statement sets a precedent that quality of life now becomes a measuring rod as to whether or not a child with a disability should live or die. That's horrific. That's terrifying. . . . This swings open a door to similar actions against other people with disabilities simply based on the fact of distress, the inconvenience, the cost, the discomfort, all of which are subjective issues."

This article may be accessed at http://www.christianpost.com/news/uk-high-court-allows-mother-to-euthanize-severely-disabled-daughter-jonieareckson-tada-says-judges-decision-terrifying-129344/.

Newsworthy is presented to inform believers. The people or sources mentioned do not necessarily carry the endorsement of FBFI.

Compiled by Robert Condict, FBFI Executive Board member and pastor of Upper Cross Roads Baptist Church, Baldwin, Maryland.

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As the journal of the FBFI, FrontLine Magazine provides a forum for God's people to reverently express a conservative Christian perspective on pertinent issues. In an effort to keep readers informed, quotes and references to many different individuals and organizations will appear. This does not imply the endorsement of the magazine or its board. Unsolicited manuscripts and artwork accepted for review.

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on LANGUAGE SCRIPTURE

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Iwas one of those smart-aleck kids who liked to correct people's English. I took pride in knowing the True Meaning of a given word. And after I studied Latin in eighth grade, I got worse: I started to learn etymologies.

Etymologies are, of course, word histories. And in my mind as a kid, the history of a word was its meaning. If an English word like "therapy" comes from the Greek term for "healing" (and it does), then "therapy" means "healing." If "navigate" comes from the Latin word for "navigate" (and it does), then, well, "navigate" means "navigate." Those are pretty boring etymologies, of course, but you don't have to look far to find exotic ones from spicy locales. "Ketchup" comes from Chinese; "punch," as in the drink, is a Hindi word; and one French phrase has actually come into English twice since 1400 (first as "vanguard," then more directly as "avant-garde"). Etymologies are fun. And they were, in my childish thinking, essential—because words mean what they used to mean.

I never gave any thought, however, to the obvious flaws in this view, a view I now know to be called the "etymological fallacy." Let me name just a few problems.

- 1. We don't really know the *original* source of any single word in any language. We can trace some words back to the time before Jesus, but we don't know with confidence a single syllable that was spoken at Babel.
- 2. We don't even know the source of some common words everybody uses every day, words invented within the lifetimes of some of your grandparents—such as "OK." Does "OK" come from "Oll Korrect" or from "Old Kinderhook"? Nobody knows for certain. So does "OK" have no meaning until we can figure out its source?
- 3. The words-mean-what-they-used-to-mean view seems to work with "navigate," but it simply fails with many other words. Take a word such as "fabulous." It's often used sarcastically. Your coffee spills on the rug and you're running late, so you mutter, "Oh, that's just fabulous." But we also use "fabulous" to mean "genuinely wonderful," as in, "That was some fabulous cheesecake!" Relatively few people—and usually only in writing—use the word to mean something like its source: the word "fable." If something is "fabulous" in that sense, it's so unbelievable as to be like a fable or fairy tale. So are the coffee-spillers and the cheesecake-likers wrong?

No. A word's history is a fun clue to its meaning, but words don't necessarily mean what they used to mean, and that's okay. God designed it that way—an assertion I hope to demonstrate in future columns.

Dr. Mark L. Ward Jr. writes Bible textbooks at BJU Press and designs church websites at Forward Design. He blogs at By Faith We Understand.

Regional Reports

Compiled by John C. Vaughn

ctober is always a busy month for FBFI travel. FBFI was featured at the annual Missions Conference at Good News Baptist Church in Chesapeake, where new FBFI board member and police chaplain Mike Ascher is the pastor. In addition to inspiring missionary presentations and powerful preaching from World Wide New Testament Baptist Missions director Dr. John O'Malley, the ladies were blessed by a presentation from Becky Vaughn. All missionaries and families enjoyed an outing to Historic Jamestown, renewed acquaintances, and made new friends.

t the Annual New Mexico Regional Fellowship, held this year at Emmanuel Baptist Church in

Gallup, where Pastor (and chaplain) police Mike Kleeberger serves, Dr. Vaughn and Dr. Kevin Schaal were the speakers. In cooperating board member Dr. Dan Mauldin's words, "The ministry of Dr. Vaughn and Dr. Schaal was excellent." Attendees—among them, FrontLine publication editor Steve Skaggs's brother, Pastor Keith Skaggs (pictured), who will host a Spring Fellowship on April 17 at Charity Baptist



Church in Rio Rancho, New Mexico—enjoyed Navajo



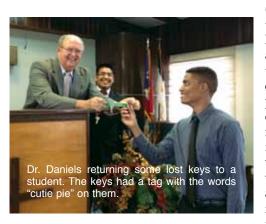
combined with a revival meeting with Evangelist Ron DeGarde, whose passionate preaching edified not only the church congregation but also all the pastors and Regional Fellowship guests. Dr. John Vaughn preached three times on the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The 20th Annual Caribbean Regional Fellowship Was held at Calvary Baptist Tabernacle in Carolina, Puerto Rico, where long-time missionary pastor Dr. Johnny Daniels is based. His influence throughout the Caribbean and in many countries

in Central and South America, Africa, the UK, and all of the island nations of the Caribbean is keenly felt. Twenty-seven nations were represented at the conference. All speakers attended at their own expense to participate in what is a great missionary effort. In addition to several speakers from the region, Pastors Yadin Rodriquez, Juan Carlos Fernandez, Scott Hester, Jerome Wefley, Friday Njovu, Jesse Naitraim, and long-time missionary to the deaf (primarily in Brazil), David Bennett. Several of these men are young, second-generation Fundamental Baptists—fruit of the work at Calvary Baptist Bible College and the Caribbean Regional FBFI.

Others speakers included Dr. Bob Jones III, Pastor John Judson (from Ketchikan, Alaska), Bro. Ken

McCoy of Project 14 Global Missions, Dr. Don Strange, and Dr. John Vaughn. Mrs. Beneth Jones spoke to the ladies, and Miss Becky Vaughn spoke to the youth. The only meeting of its kind that most who were present have the opportunity to attend, sessions began at 8 AM and ended after 9 PM from Monday evening through Friday evening. Attendees sacrificed in several offerings to cover all expenses (approximately \$5000) of the weeklong conference, also raising funds for a computer and software (\$700) needed by Pastor Wefley to translate the Bible into Creole for believers in Haiti. Also, all needed funds



(\$700) were raised to enable Pastor Njovu to purchase a portable PA system to use in his extensive open-air preaching in various small villages in Zimbabwe. And finally, over \$1000 was raised to provide FrontLine magazine subscriptions for national pastors for whom the mag-

azine and the Caribbean Regional Fellowship are the two primary sources of ministry help and encouragement.



Dan Cleghorn

A Small-Town Chaplain

Asmall-town chaplain ministry offers many opportunities for a local pastor to serve his community and demonstrate the local church's love for the hurt and needy. A chaplain may assist at the scenes of unattended deaths, suicides, fatal accidents, structure fires, and medical calls involving trauma or death. A primary responsibility of the chaplain is to contact the next-of-kin of the deceased (death notification), providing counsel and answers to the family. His "ministry of presence" in a small town renders calm assurance and security that law enforcement, fire personnel, and community members alike appreciate.

Chewelah is a town of 2600 people located in northeast Washington on the far western edge of the Rocky Mountains. In February of 2004 I started volunteering as a chaplain to the Chewelah Police Department. Since that time I have also assisted the Stevens County Sheriff's Department and Washington State Patrol. In 2007 the Chewelah Volunteer Fire Department asked me to be their chaplain, which has expanded to assisting Stevens County Fire District 4 as well.

By working with various departments in the county, a chaplain meets many men and women who would never come through the doors of the church—abuse victims, fire victims, grieving family members, those involved in traumatic incidents, families of first responders. Some have never heard a clear gospel presentation. Some may not personally know even one genuine believer. Yet God brings a chaplain across their paths to invest in them and then wait for an opportunity to share the truth of the gospel.

A "ride along" is a vital part of the chaplain ministry. These four-to-six-hour shifts riding with the officers supply plenty of time for discussion. Topics range from the Biblical teaching on the sanctity of life following a domestic violence situation that stemmed from a pregnant woman wanting to abort her baby, to demon possession following a midnight call involving a naked man hanging crosses upsidedown in the cemetery.

First responders welcome the opportunity to talk to the chaplain about questions generated by their job. In a small community, the volunteer first



responders are frequently acquainted with those who have died in the accidents. This takes a toll on them. Every first responder has to deal with his first dead body at some point; some have never had to face death before. When help is needed, when coping becomes difficult, when the nightmares and flashbacks come, they turn to the chaplain, who can help them through their problems.



One of the most difficult aspects of the chaplain ministry is ministering to family members of the deceased, yet these opportunities afford some of the best openings to share the gospel. Family members, especially Catholics who have had a loved one commit suicide, often ask if their loved one is in Heaven. I share with them that only God knows whether their loved one genuinely called upon Christ to forgive him of his sins and be his Savior; if he did trust Christ, then not even suicide can keep him from God's Heaven. Simply being with these people in their grief has opened the door for me to conduct their loved one's funeral.

The chaplaincy is first and foremost a ministry of Chewelah Baptist Church, which desires to get outside

its walls and put "boots on the ground" in an attempt to reach the community for Christ. These people could find love and freedom in Christ, if only they knew to look to Him, if only someone would share His truth and compassion. The answer to every problem, for every person, is a relationship with Christ. A small-town chaplain who is often on the front lines of a crisis can share this good news with them in their most difficult trials.

Dan Cleghorn has served as pastor of Chewelah Baptist Church since 2001. He previously served as pastor in the Bremerton/Silverdale, Washington, area for fifteen years. His wife, Karen, homeschooled their five children, and they have recently become "empty nesters."





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In 2 Timothy 2:1 the apostle Paul said to young Timothy, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." We need to mentor our brothers and sisters in Christ—those who are physically younger than we but also those who are spiritually younger. We need to help them be strong in the Lord, but to do this requires time, patience, sacrifice, and love.

When I was in high school, I was mentored by my football coach. For three years he greatly impacted my life. His instructions, rebukes, and encouragement helped shape me to be the player I needed to be.

First, I remember his instructions. He said that when you tackle someone, always hit him below the knees. If you tackle him high, he'll drive you back. He taught me not to look at the opponent's eyes but at his waist and knees. He emphasized the importance of running hard and tackling by wrapping your arms around your opponent.

Second, I remember his rebukes. On one occasion during football practice I walked up to our punter and told him that I wanted to punt. So I picked up the football and punted it. The coach saw me do this and walked up to me and asked me if I was the team punter. When I replied no, he said to me, "You are not the punter, and you have no business punting the ball. Now go and run three laps around the field for doing what you are not supposed to do!"

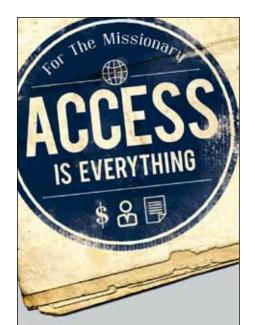
Third, I remember his encouragement. One of our teammates got injured, and the coach needed someone to fill his position. He had our team sit down and asked us, "Which one of you can rise up and take this key position? Who has the drive in him to work hard and fill this spot?" His challenge so gripped me that I promised myself I was going to get that position. I worked my hardest in every practice and pushed myself to the limit. After two weeks of practice, the coach had us all sit down again. He said, "I want to announce the man who has worked the hardest and has earned the position we need filled. That man is Jerry Sivnksty!" I cannot tell you how much that encouraged me! By the way, that same drive my coach instilled in me for football has affected every other area of my life as well. He had no idea of the impact he made on my life.

When we mentor someone, I believe the same principles must be applied to their lives. First, we must instruct them. As we look at the apostle Paul's mentoring of young Timothy we see his constant instruction to him. Second Timothy 1:7, 8 reads, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." Paul exhorted Timothy in verse 22, "Flee also youthful lusts; but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." Then he admonished him in the next verse, "But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strife." Paul spent a lot of time instructing this young man; and we must do the same with those we are mentoring.

I would like to share what one of my sons did in mentoring his oldest son. Since we all gather together for Thanksgiving each year, he wanted his brothers, brotherin-law, and me to go to a restaurant one morning and give instruction to his son, Hunter, who had just turned twelve. We shared a great breakfast that included lots of stories and laughter. After the meal we all turned serious and began to give instruction to Hunter. First, I was asked to instruct him in the area of memorizing Scripture (Ps. 119:11). When I finished, his Uncle Todd instructed him in the area of prayer (1 Tim. 2:1). Then his Uncle Scott instructed him in the area of moral purity (1 Tim. 5:22). Then his Uncle Mike instructed him in the area of Bible reading and meditation (2 Tim. 2:15). It was a very special and touching time as each one of us talked to Hunter. When we had all finished, his father Brent spoke from his heart about how important it is for Hunter to realize that we all love him and desire to see the Lord shape his life.

I would like to encourage you to help mentor the lives of young people or those who may be young in the faith. Perhaps what we have done will motivate you to pour your life into others, to help shape and mold them in the same areas we have addressed here.

Evangelist Jerry Sivnksty may be contacted at PO Box 141, Starr, SC 29684 or via e-mail at evangjsivn@aol.com.



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The apostles called believers to a mindset and lifestyle distinctively set apart from the world. Today's church by contrast increasingly reflects the entertainment-saturated, consumer-driven values of the godless world system around it. The "salt" is at serious risk of losing its saltiness (Matt. 5:13).

Join the seminary faculty of BJU for this crucial conference as it presents how believers, by rightly interpreting and applying the Scriptures, can embrace the appeals and ideals of Christ and reject the appeals and ideals of "this present evil world" (Gal. 1:4).

