

# REDEEMING THE TIME

*"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16).*

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## The Majestic March of Days

BY ROBERT W. ANDERSON

**T**he Fourth of July fireworks, with their brilliant color and thunderous sound, are impressive and memorable for entertainment. Otherwise, they are like the grass which withers and the flower that fades away.

By contrast, consider the front row box seat in Genesis 1 from

which God allows us to witness the sight and sound of the six days of creation. What a glorious event: heaven and earth and "all that in them is" blossoming into sight! What a stupendous "sound": "by the word of the Lord were the heavens made" (Psalm 33:6).

Unlike the fireworks that disappear amid a few tendrils of smoke,

God has "established the earth and it abideth" (Psalm 119:90). God's creation is the very first of the works that God sets before us to evoke our worship and sense of dependence on Him as "a faithful Creator" (1 Peter 4:19).

All those who profess to be Christians will readily ascribe the creation

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## NAME IT AND CLAIM IT

### *"Shall Ye Possess the Land?"*

BY KEN OLSON

**W**hen I talk about Brazil, where we have been living, I talk quite a bit about the Pentecostals. The reason is that the Pentecostals are totally taking over Brazil. They are everywhere, overwhelming all of the churches. There is much false teaching and false doctrine being taught.

The title of my message is "Name It and Claim It." That is one of the

big doctrines of the Pentecostals there. They believe you can go into the Bible, take a promise that was made to Abraham, to Jabez, or whomever, and grab that promise and claim it for yourself.


That is exactly what they were doing in Ezekiel 33, which is our passage for this message. Here, in the Old Testament, Ezekiel is more up to date than tomorrow morning's newspaper! Ezekiel 33:23-24 says: "Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land

of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land; but we are many; the land is given us for inheritance."

Here they were naming the land of Israel, and they were claiming it. They were there living in these waste areas, in these desert areas. They looked around and there were these nice areas in the land of Israel, and they decided, "God wants us to have those, and we are going to name and

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# REFORMATION



## *Beginnings*

### PART II

## The Reformation Flame Expands

BY MARK W. EVANS

**M**artin Luther confronted a Dominican monk, John Tetzel, with Scriptural truths in his 95 Theses, nailed to the castle church door in Wittenberg, Germany, October 31, 1517. The Indulgence seller raged in vain against his adversary. Luther's debate propositions had exalted the Bible over papal authority. The Theses were quickly disseminated throughout Europe, even arriving at the Vatican within a month. Tetzel's Indulgence market was demolished and truth triumphed over error.

Dr. Luther had no thought of damaging the papacy when he composed his Theses, but the Lord directed otherwise. It was necessary that the light of truth shine upon Rome's darkness. Providentially, Pope Leo X

closed his eyes to the Theses and its incriminating teachings. He defended Luther when accused of being a heretic: "Brother Martin Luther is a very fine genius and all that is said against him is mere monkish jealousy."<sup>1</sup> While the pontiff devoted himself to personal pleasures, the 95 Theses opened eyes throughout Europe. J.A. Wylie, in his *History of Protestantism*, wrote: "In this paper Luther struck at more than the abuses of indulgences. Underneath was a principle subversive of the whole Papal system. In the midst of some remaining darkness — for he still reverences the Pope, believes in purgatory, and speaks of the merits of the saints — he preaches the Gospel of a free salvation. The 'Theses' put God's gift in sharp antagonism to the Pope's gift. The one is free, the other has to be bought. God's pardon does

not need the Pope's endorsement, but the Pope's forgiveness, unless followed by God's, is of no avail; it is a cheat, a delusion. Such is the doctrine of the 'Theses.' That mightiest of all prerogatives, the power of pardoning sins and so of saving men's souls, is taken from the 'Church' and given back to God."<sup>2</sup>

Satan was not content to have his kingdom invaded. Cries of alarm filled the papal domains. Luther remained anchored to the Word of God and met each opponent with infallible truth. In the process, he grew in his understanding and boldness. While such opposition would have overwhelmed many, the humble monk found comfort and courage that allowed him to defy the slander and outrage heaped upon him. A massive chasm emerged between Bible truth and the papacy's worn out appeals to Popes, councils, traditions, and philosophical precepts. "What is the chaff, to the wheat, saith the Lord."<sup>3</sup> A phenomenon, unknown to haughty Rome arose before her baffled eyes. The so-called "faithful" began to look at their chains and question Rome's claim to their spiritual imprisonment. Leo X finally awoke to the danger and determined to silence the German monk.

An official Roman censor, Prierio, was one of the first from the popish hierarchy to seek the extermination of the heretic. Having power to dictate what could and could not be read, he turned his eyes upon Luther's writings. Merle d'Aubigne saw a contrast that still continues today: "Freedom of speech, freedom of inquiry, freedom of belief, come into collision in the city of Rome with that power which claims to hold in its hands the monopoly of intelligence, and to open and shut at pleasure the mouth of Christendom. The struggle of Christian liberty which engenders children of God, with pontifical despotism which produces slaves of Rome, is typified, as it were, in the first days of the Reformation,

in the encounter of Luther and Prierio.”<sup>4</sup> The censor wrote a book exalting the Pope and affirming his absolute authority. His thesis was in the form of a question: “What is the sole infallible authority for Christians?”<sup>5</sup> His unbiblical answer was, “the Pope.” The pontiff, according to Prierio, had authority over God’s Word. Luther presented a verse to the prelate: “Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” After teaching God’s truth, the Reformer addressed his adversary’s craving to see his death. “Do you thirst for blood? ... If I am put to death Christ lives, Christ, my Lord and the Lord of all, blessed forevermore. Amen.” Prierio wrote two more books and ascended to an unprecedented height of papal loyalty. He wrote: “[Although] the pope should make the whole world go with him to hell, he could neither be condemned nor deposed.” Pope Leo X believed it best to silence his advocate.<sup>6</sup>

Other contests ensued, but none could stand before the Word of God. Luther defeated his foes with one hand grasping the Sword of the Spirit while using his other hand to dispense Scriptural truth to a spiritually famished people. In the hearts of monks, priests, princes, noblemen, and peasants, the Gospel’s sweet savor of “life unto life” brought oppressed souls into the joys of salvation. Yet, the papacy remained implacable in its opposition to truth. She comforted herself with the knowledge that she always prevailed and crushed her adversaries. How could a German monk stand before her invincible might?

On August 7, 1518, Pope Leo X summoned Luther to Rome. All knew

that this was a death sentence. Yet, God’s purposes cannot be defeated. The One who rules the universe glorifies Himself, sustains His true, blood-bought Church, and defeats all His and their enemies. Although Rome succeeded in burning John Hus and many others, her supposed victories were actually defeats. Their victims entered into eternal glory and Christ advanced His true Church.



The Apostle John, by the Holy Spirit, described Rome’s false Church: “And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: and upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.”<sup>7</sup> Luther and all the Reformers knew Rome as the Antichrist.

The Lord providentially intervened for Luther. Rome would not succeed in crushing her prey. Political events made it expedient for Pope Leo X to favor Elector Fredrick’s request that Luther’s trial take place on German soil. An ambitious legate, Thomas de Vio, also known as Cardinal Cajetan, desired to have the honor of silencing the troublesome monk. His wish was granted and the trial was planned to take place in

Augsburg, Germany. J.A. Wylie wrote: “The legate’s instructions were brief but precise, and were to this effect: that he should compel the monk to retract; and, failing this, that he should shut him up in safe custody till the Pope should be pleased to send for him. This was as much as to say, ‘Send him in chains to Rome.’”<sup>8</sup>

Luther began his journey to Augsburg on September 22, 1518. His friends warned him of impending danger. Without a safe-conduct, the Reformer traveled on foot to the distant city. He arrived unmolested and awaited trial. Three times he appeared before the legate. Each time he stood upon the Word of God as his judge.

The legate appealed to Thomas Aquinas and his opinion that the Pope’s infallibility included authority over the Bible and councils. Following the trial, Luther waited four days for a response from the Cardinal. After writing a final letter to the legate, Luther left the city in the dark of night. He arrived at Wittenberg on

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## REDEEMING THE TIME

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# "Who Do Men Say That I Am?"

BY BRAD K. GSELL

Allah is just the Arabic word for God. We all worship the same God." "Jesus is important to Islam, just as He is to Christianity." We all have probably heard such claims being made — even by some who say they are Bible-believing Christians.

This has become the mantra of secularists and ecumenical church leaders, who could not care less about the doctrine of either religion. They believe that anyone who rejects another religion besides Christianity is a "bigot" and a "hater." Since they already are dismissive of Biblical truth, they spurn, rather than hold dear, the precious doctrines of the Word of God. They further seek to show that divisions between Islam and Christianity are mostly based on willful ignorance, and insignificant differences.

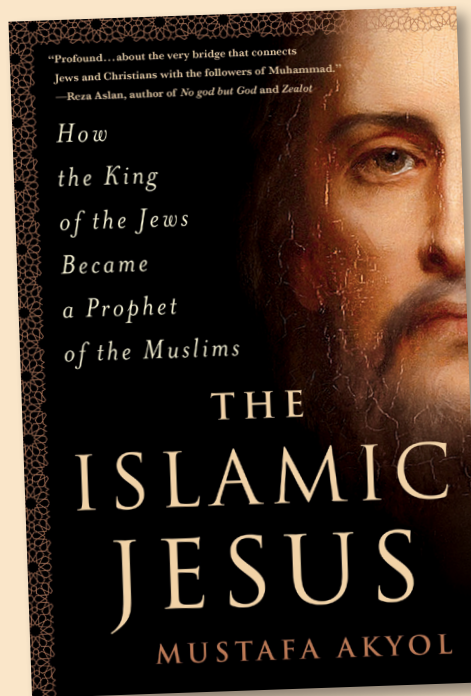
## Is there "common ground" between the Muslim Jesus and the Christ of the Scriptures?

There are many in the secular and religious press that are vested in promoting this theme of the unity possible between Christians and Muslims concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ. Following are a few examples.

"Muslims Love Jesus Too ..." read the headline of a Vox Media Christmas-themed article on December 25, 2016. The writer's version of "peace on earth" was to point out supposed similarities held by Muslims and Christians concerning Je-

sus, while downplaying, or refusing to acknowledge, stark differences.

The *National Catholic Reporter*, August 25, 2017, carried an article by Ra'fat Al-Dajani entitled: "The Muslim Jesus provides common ground for Christianity, Islam." Al-Dajani writes: "It would surprise



many to know that the Prophet Muhammad is only mentioned a total of four times in the Quran while Jesus, the son of Mary, is mentioned 25 times and Moses 136 times. The Quran dedicates a whole chapter to Mary, who is the only woman mentioned by name in the sacred text.... The Islamic version of the Jesus story especially, is quite similar to the Christian version.... Naturally there are theological differences between

Muslims and Christians regarding Jesus but there are far more similarities and these similarities are what should be emphasized in order to show the common ground between these two faiths, which together represent 4.1 billion followers worldwide and 55.3 percent of the world's population."

Chicago Doctor Hesham A. Hassaballa frequently writes and speaks on this theme. His articles are published widely — everywhere from Religious News Service to *The Chicago Tribune*. Under the header "Common Word, Common Lord," Hassaballa wrote on the BeliefNet website: "... Christians can learn that Islam is not an alien religion. With its intriguing adoration for Jesus, Islam is in fact the closest faith on Earth to Christianity. This, of course, is a fact that Muslims should realize and keep in mind as well.... Muslims and Christians have way, way more in common than in distinction, and nothing fits this bill more than the person of Jesus Christ."

A recent book on this subject by Mustafa Akyol has been receiving wide acclaim. It is entitled *The Islamic Jesus: How the King of the Jews Became a Prophet of the Muslims*. Reza Aslan, a member of the American Academy of Religion, the Society of Biblical Literature, and the International Qur'anic Studies Association, is quoted on the dust jacket of the book: "This [book] is a profound contribution in proving that Judaism and Christianity are not adversaries of Muslims, but rather intrinsic parts of the entire Islamic belief system."

## "Who do men say that I am?"

These ecumenists and secularists display the same lack of understanding as in Jesus' day. In Matthew 16:13-17, Jesus asks His disciples: "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say



that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”

A pamphlet produced by the American Islamic Outreach Foundation shows clearly that Islam, like some in Jesus’ day, sees Him as merely “one of the prophets.” They reject the clear answer of Peter, which was blessed by Christ.

The writers of the pamphlet, entitled “Jesus (Peace Be Upon Him): A Prophet in Islam,” can be thanked for their honesty and candor, despite the error they promote. They state that their goal is to present “the real historical Jesus,” and begin by acknowledging that Muslims and Christians “view him [Jesus] in very different ways.”

Following is a brief analysis of the points made in this pamphlet:

### **“JESUS AS GOD”:**

#### **“Jesus (PBUH): A Prophet in Islam”:**

“Some Christians claim that ‘Jesus is God’ or part of a trinity — that he is the incarnation of God on earth, and that God took on a human form. However, according to the Bible, Jesus was born, ate, slept, prayed and had limited knowledge — all attributes not befitting God.

“God has attributes of perfection whereas Man is the opposite. How can anything be two complete opposites simultaneously. Islam teaches that God is always perfect. To believe that God became a man is to claim that God is or was (at some point in time), imperfect.... God does not do ungodly acts.... Jesus is being referred to as an extraordinary human being and nothing more.” Matthew 26:39, Matthew 21:10-11, John 14:28, John 20:17 and Mat-

thew 15:9 are used to supposedly show that Christ was not God.

**The Scriptures:** The Bible does present Jesus as God.

John begins his gospel by declaring this without equivocation: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” The context is clearly speaking of Jesus Christ as the “living Word.”

Christ Himself declared: “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30).

He tells Philip: “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?” (John 14:9).

The Apostles declared Christ to be God. 2 Peter 1:1 declares: “To them who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ”

Paul tells Titus to be: “looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

In Colossians 2:9 we are told: “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”

The Bible also clearly asserts the doctrine of the Trinity. The Great Commission that Christ gave His disciples of all times states: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19).

The benedictions at the end of some of the New Testament epistles declare the Trinity to be true. Paul writes: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen” (2 Corinthians 13:14).

Peter writes: “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied” (1 Peter 1:2).

### **“SON OF GOD”:**

#### **“Jesus (PBUH): A Prophet in Islam”:**

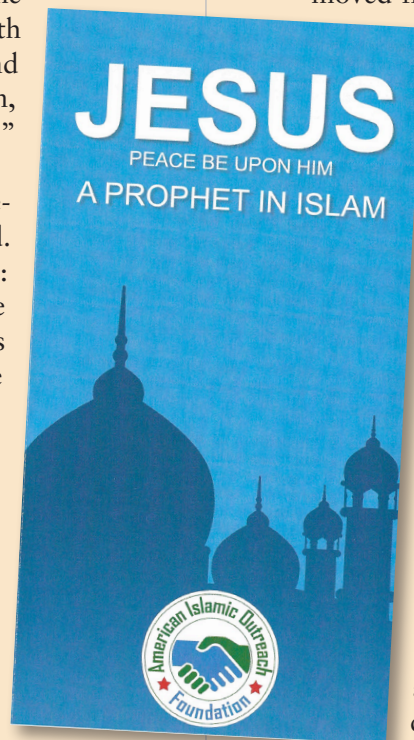
“Some Christians claim that Jesus is the Son of God. What does this actually mean? Surely God is far removed from having a physical

and literal son. Humans have human children. Cats have kittens. What does it mean for God to have a child? Rather than being taken literally, we find the term “Son of God” is symbolically used in the earliest biblical languages for a “righteous person,” and has been used for David, Solomon and Israel — not exclusively for Jesus....”

**The Scriptures:** The Scriptures do declare all believers to be children of God. However, this is clearly shown

to be far different from the relationship of Christ to the Father. Christ is referred to as THE Son of God, indicating a unique position. He also is referred to as “the only begotten Son” in several places. Our beloved John 3:16 states: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

This separate, unique relationship was declared from the time of His birth. Luke 1:35 states: “And the angel answered and said unto her [Mary], The Holy Ghost shall come



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## "WHO DO MEN SAY THAT I AM?"

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upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

The Apostle John emphasizes this again in 1 John 4:9: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him."

Isaiah 9:6: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

Paul tells us in Romans 1:4 that Christ was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

Islam considers the idea of God having a son to be offensive. However, to the Christian, who knows His Bible, it is our joy, and is a fundamental belief in understanding who our great God is.

### "FATHER & LORD":

#### "Jesus (PBUH): A Prophet in Islam":

"In the same way, when the word 'Father' is used to refer to God it shouldn't be taken literally. Instead, it's a way of saying God is the creator, sustainer and supreme master of all.... Also, Jesus was sometimes called 'Lord' by the disciples. This term is used in the original languages of the Bible, for God as well as for people who are held in high esteem.... In other parts of the Bible, Jesus is even called a 'servant' of God by the disciples: 'The God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus' (Acts 3:13). This clearly shows that when 'Lord' is used to refer to Jesus, it is a title of respect, not of divinity."

**The Scriptures:** These words show a fundamental misunderstanding of the Christ of the Scriptures. Christ is not merely called "Lord" in the same way you would refer to someone as "mister," as a sign of respect. Revelation 17:14 places this title in the superlative, in a way that could refer to no other: "These will wage war against the Lamb [Christ], and the Lamb will overcome them; for He is Lord of lords and King of kings: and those who are with Him are called and chosen, and faithful."

Luke 2:11 says: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." This title was given to Christ from His very birth — not as a sign of respect to an adult man.

Paul makes Christ's sole Lordship very clear in 1 Corinthians 8:6: "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him."

2 Corinthians 4:5: "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."

Further, the idea of God being a "servant" is offensive to Muslims. Yet, this message is central to the teaching of Scripture. Isaiah 53 presents to us Christ, who was fully God and fully man, as the suffering servant.

Mark 10:45 tells us: "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Philippians 2:5-11 states: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name

which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

### "THE PROPHET":

#### "Jesus (PBUH): A Prophet in Islam":

"In Judaism, Jesus PBUH is denied as the Messiah. This is in stark contrast to Christianity where he is worshipped as a deity, or the son of God. Islam takes the middle ground and acknowledges Jesus as an honourable prophet and Messenger of God, as well as the Messiah, but Muslims do not worship him — as worship is for God alone, who created Jesus."

**The Scriptures:** A prophet is a "forth-teller," one who bears a message. All of the Old Testament prophets came bearing messages from God.

The Old Testament Prophetic Books are replete with phrases to indicate clearly that the messages being given are not from the particular prophet, but are indeed from God Himself. For example, Jeremiah 32:2 begins: "Thus saith the Lord the maker thereof...." Ezekiel 33:1-2 states: "Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them...."

Christ clearly came as a messenger from God. He says in John 6:38: "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me."

Christ gives the definition of His role as a Prophet in John 14:10-11: "... the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me...."

Matthew 9:35 tells us of Christ's earthly ministry: "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom,

and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.” This message was indeed the Word of God.

It is interesting that in Acts 3:22-23, Christ is presented as the fulfillment of the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15. Peter states: “For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.”

While preaching the words of His Father in the synagogue, the people “were offended in him.” “But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house” (Matthew 13:57).

When some of the Pharisees came and told Jesus that Herod wanted to kill Him, part of His response was: “... for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.”

This pamphlet also declares that Christ is a “created” being, something the Scriptures strongly deny. Paul told the believers in Colosse: “For by him [Christ] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist” (Colossians 1:16-17).

Surely, our Lord Jesus Christ is our eternal “Prophet, Priest and King”!

### **“MIRACULOUS BIRTH”:**

#### **“Jesus (PBUH): A Prophet in Islam”:**

“Some claim that his miraculous birth is evidence of Jesus’ divinity. However, Jesus was not the first to come into existence without a father, as Prophet Adam (peace be upon him) before him had neither a father nor mother. God says: ‘The likeness

of Jesus before God is as that of Adam....’ If Jesus is worshipped due to having no father, then surely Adam is more deserving of worship since he was created without either parent.”

**The Scriptures:** Here, “the Prophet” Jesus Christ is put on the same plane as “the Prophet” Adam. Christ is no more to be worshipped than is Adam.

Yet, the Bible CONTRASTS the sin of Adam with the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:18-21 states: “Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s [Adam’s] disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one [Christ] shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

The Apostle Paul could not make this contrast much clearer than he does in 1 Corinthians 15:22, where he states: “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

Isaiah 7:14 tells us: “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

Matthew 1:23 removes any doubt that Isaiah is prophesying the coming of Christ into the world. Further, Matthew gives the definition of “Immanuel”: “God with us”!

### **MIRACLES OF JESUS”:**

#### **“Jesus (PBUH): A Prophet in Islam”:**

“The fact that Jesus (peace be upon him) performed miracles does not mean that he was anything more than a humble servant of God. In

fact, many Messengers performed miracles, including Noah, Moses and Muhammad (may peace be upon them all) and these miracles only took place by the permission of God, so as to demonstrate the authenticity of the messenger.”

**The Scriptures:** There certainly were other signs and wonders throughout Scripture, all in the direct providence of God. The plagues of Egypt, for their disobedience against God and His people, cannot be explained away as mere natural phenomena occurring in their natural course. The one common thread between the miracles of the Bible is that they all proceeded from the direct hand of God, even if human implementation was involved. This goes for the Old Testament, as well as the instances of “miracles” involving the Apostles in the Book of Acts and elsewhere.

However, the miracles of Christ were done directly by God in the flesh, and thus are unique. Christ performed miracles that the Old Testament prophets predicted hundreds of years before Christ’s appearance on this earth. Isaiah 35:4-6 says: “... he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.”

### **“MESSAGE OF JESUS”:**

#### **“Jesus (PBUH): A Prophet in Islam”:**

“The truth is, Jesus preached the same message as all the Prophets of the Old Testament. There is a passage in the Bible that really emphasizes this core message. A man came to Jesus and asked ‘Which is the first commandment of all?’ Jesus answered, ‘The first commandment of all the commandments is, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is

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## "WHO DO MEN SAY THAT I AM?"

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one” (Mark 12:28-29). So the greatest commandment, the most important belief according to Jesus, is that God is one. If Jesus was God he would have said, ‘I am God, worship me.’ Instead, he merely repeated a verse from the Old Testament confirming that God is One.”

**The Scriptures:** Christ did preach the same message as “all the prophets of the Old Testament.” There is great unity to the Scriptures, since all the books came from the hand of God. Yet, the message of Christ was at the same time unique. No other prophet could proclaim: “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

What other prophet could declare: “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.... I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.... My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one” (John 10:9-11, 14-15, 27-30)?

## "JESUS IN ISLAM"

### "Jesus (PBUH): A Prophet in Islam":

The closing paragraph of the pamphlet states: “Islam teaches us to

love and respect all the Prophets of God, but loving and respecting them does not mean worshipping them because worship is due only to God. Acknowledging Jesus as a Prophet of God and becoming a Muslim does not mean changing or losing your Christian identity. It is about going back to the original and pure teachings of Jesus.”

**The Scriptures:** The writers of this pamphlet, based on their understanding of the Quran, present to us a Christ who is not God, did not die for our sins, and is totally incapable of saving our souls. Yet, if we only accept their Jesus, we can keep our “Christian identity.”

In denying that Christ is God, they likewise present to us a false god. In the Ten Commandments, God charges His people to “have no other gods before me.” Throughout the Scriptures, God is defined clearly as to who He is, the attributes that He possesses and the actions He has taken. There is no room given to other writings, such as the Quran, which contradict the Scriptures. God tells us in Isaiah 8:20: “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” God tells us concerning Jesus Christ in Acts 4:12: “Neither is there salvation in any other [but Christ]: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

May we reject any attempts to try to present Islam and Christianity as being “close” in their beliefs. The god of Islam cannot save. May we believe and proclaim, without compromise, Christ as He is presented to us in the Scriptures — the Word of God. •



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## REFORMATION BEGINNINGS – PART II

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October 30, 1518. The sovereign God protected His servant, removing him from the murderous grasp of Rome. J.A. Wylie wrote concerning Luther’s victory: “[Cardinal Cajetan] had failed to compel the retraction of the monk; his person was now beyond his reach; and he carried with him the prestige of victory; Rome had been foiled in this her first passage of arms with the new faith; the cardinal, who hoped to rehabilitate himself as a diplomatist, had come out of the affair as a bungler: what would they say of him at Rome? The more he reflected, the greater appeared to him the mischief that would grow out of this matter. He had secretly exulted when told that Luther was in Augsburg; but better the monk had never entered its gates, than that he should come hither to defy Rome in the person of her legate, and go away, not only unharmed, but even triumphing. The cardinal was filled with indignation, shame, and rage.”<sup>9</sup> •

<sup>1</sup>J.H. Merle d’Aubigne, *History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, vol. I (New York: American Tract Society, 1847), p. 282.

<sup>2</sup>J.A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism*, vol. I (New York: Cassell and Company, Ltd., n.d. [originally published in 1878]), pp. 262,263.

<sup>3</sup>Jeremiah 23:28.

<sup>4</sup>Wylie, p. 308.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 308.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 312-313.

<sup>7</sup>Revelation 17:4-6.

<sup>8</sup>Wylie, p. 273.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 284.



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# THE MAJESTIC MARCH OF DAYS

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of the universe to God. But it troubles us that more and more of them balk at accepting Scripture's teaching that God created all things "in the space of six days and all very good."<sup>1</sup> I will suggest some scriptural considerations why I take that literally and cannot accept the day-age theory of creation.

## Distinctions

Distinctions permeate Genesis 1. There is a distinction of persons in the Godhead, by whom heaven and earth were made. As we read the first chapter of the Bible, there is no question that God the Father was the Creator. It is evident that the Son was Creator, as we learn from John 1:3, "All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made." That the Holy Spirit was equally involved in Creation is clear from Genesis 1:2b, "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Recognizing the distinctions between the persons of the Godhead, who alone created "all that is," will save us from the heresy of Unitarianism.

There is also the distinction between what God is and what He made. Observing this distinction in the opening chapter of Scripture will save us from what J. Gresham Machen called the "deadly error" of pantheism, which philosophy, as Machen explained, "identifies God with the totality of nature."<sup>2</sup>

God created heaven and earth, the light, the firmament (the expanse or space). He made the dry land and the seas; the sun, moon and stars; creatures that inhabit the waters; the fowls that fly in the air; the creatures that move about upon the earth. He created man as the crown of the creation: "male and female created he

them." All that God made is definite, explicit and precisely stated.

Not only is there a sharp distinction between God and what He created, but also all the objects He created are distinct from one another. God shows distinctions by dividing one thing from another: (1) "...and God divided the light from the darkness" (verse 4). (2) "God ... divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament" (verse 7).

Further distinctions existed by what He "named" the things He created. "God called the light Day and the darkness he called Night." (verse 5). "And God called the firmament Heaven" (verse 8). "And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas" (verse 10).

Yet, again, there are distinctions in place for things to produce after their kind, as in verse 11: "the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind"; verse 12: "herb yielding seed after his kind"; and verse 21: "... the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind." God made things different or distinct from one another, He divided one thing from another, He called each thing by a distinct name. Divided — Called — Brought forth after their kind!

All His creative actions resulted in distinctions impossible not to notice. The distinctions in what God made are tightly, inseparably woven

together with the days on which He made them all. How is it we can know exactly what a sea, the sun, or seed bearing vegetation was, but do not know what a day was — only that it was a very long time, millions of years even?

The sharp distinctions that exist in what God made are a frame of reference for understanding and interpreting the precise days of the Creation week. "And God said, Let there be light.... And the evening and the morning were the first day" (Genesis 1:3,5a). God created language and uses words to convey His message to us. Words are important: "first day," "second day," "third day" — each is different. These days, with their mornings and evenings, fit the pattern of distinctions set by God in this account.

Exodus 20:11 clearly states, "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is." This is another potent argument for six ordinary days of creation. But the premier argument for literal days is the first one in Scriptural order: the specific mention of what God made standing alongside the specific days in which He made it all.

Those who subscribe to the day-age position have no such distinctions in the days. They see clarity in what is created — until they get to the days. Then everything turns blurry. They cannot tell us exactly how

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# THE MAJESTIC MARCH OF DAYS

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long each day lasted, where one began and where it ended. One day blends into another. This is out of all keeping with the rest of the creation account. It runs counter to what God made precise, observable, exact, definite.

Those who believe they were literal, ordinary, solar days know as clearly what a day is as they know what the sun, moon and stars are. A day then and a day now are the same. We like the consistency and clarity of the distinctions that frame the chapter.

The work of each creation day has the distinction of being seen by God as “very good.” But according to the day-age position, the work of each of the days — comprised of millions of years — is enshrined in the rents and tears and convulsed features of the earth’s crust. Look, for instance, at the tangle of fossilized bones at the Dinosaur National Monument on the border of Colorado and Utah. Think of God saying “very good” about that mass of bones tangled together in death.

If one can reject the distinction of days in Genesis 1, and instead accept the idea that one age imperceptibly bled into another across millions of years, one may also reject the lines of distinction drawn between each kind in Genesis 1:11,12, which says animals reproduce “each according to its kind,” and instead believe that life can evolve imperceptibly from one kind to another.

The distinctions between what God made in the sphere of nature, and the days over which He made them, prepare us for the distinctions He has set in place in the moral realm. After making distinctions between what He created, God made distinctions between the trees in the Garden of Eden: many from which

our first parents might eat and one from which He commanded they should not eat.

The distinctions clearly stated in Genesis 1 prepare us for the moral distinctions set forth in Genesis 2 through Revelation 22. We are fearful that to let mere human thinking and arguments smudge the distinctions of the days in Genesis 1 may allow for blurring the moral and spiritual distinctions that are set forth in the rest of the Word of God.

## The Death of Adam

“And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died” (Genesis 5:5). If the days of Genesis were millions of years long, as some claim, then Adam, who was created on the sixth day, must have been four million 930 years old when he died, or 40 million 930 years of age, or even 400 million 930 years old at his death. If he was created some time in the course of the “millions of years long” sixth day, the numbers don’t add up. In my thinking, if one believes in the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, Adam’s death at a mere 930 years poses a problem for old-earth (day-age) proponents.

## Genesis 1 “Days” Consistent With Other Time Markers in Genesis

As Moses charted the days of the creation of the heavens and the earth, so he traced the days and months and years of its destruction in the Noahic Flood. “In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up...” (Genesis 7:11). Further in the flood account, he writes, “And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month: in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen”

(Genesis 8:5). Finally, he says, “And in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, was the earth dried” (Genesis 8:14). Did Moses, who recorded the creation days with their morning and evening, consciously use the word “day” in that setting differently than he did in the account of the destruction of the earth by the flood, with its months and years — and days?

According to the same pattern, Moses records the test of Abraham concerning Isaac: “And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son.... Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place ...” (Genesis 22:3,4). Does Moses give any hint of not using days and months and years in their ordinary sense?

Now some will mention Genesis 2:4, where Moses spoke of “the day that the Lord made the heaven and the earth.” They will say the word “day” is understood as a general time period, even millions of years. There is no doubt that the word “day” is sometimes taken in a general sense. The meaning of “day” is decided by context. But, in Genesis 2:4 we understand “the day” to refer to the six days of Genesis 1, just as when Christ spoke in John 8:56: “... Abraham rejoiced to see my day....” He meant the time our Lord was on earth accomplishing the salvation of His people. Neither reference refers to millions and millions of years, but to a very specific time in history.

## Hezekiah’s Prayer

We add what seems a practical example of the importance of the length of the creative days. Refresh your memory of Rabshakeh, the military field marshal of Sennacherib, king of the super-power Assyria, some 700 years B.C. Assyria had conquered cities and kingdoms all around in the neighborhood of Jeru-



saalem and Judah. Rabshakeh appeared outside Jerusalem and argued that they should surrender without resistance. Jerusalem was shut up by the Assyrian army, as if it were a bird in a cage, when Hezekiah went up to the temple and prayed, “O Lord of hosts ... that dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth” (Isaiah 37:16). For a king and his city that are in dire straits, what is most likely to cause thoughts of God’s creation to evoke an appeal for help? Would it be that God’s creation took place at an unhurried pace across millions of years or that all was brought into existence in merely six days? Which gave the greater grounds for hope of a speedy deliverance?

Speaking of hope, what about our hope of the future? Thinking of 2 Peter 3:13, “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth.” A friend and I both wondered to each other if it will also take God millions or billions of years to create the new heaven and earth.

### John 1 and Genesis 1

Reading the gospel of John, we have a *de ja vu* moment. John says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... All things were made by him ... (John 1:1,3). From the first words of his account, John discerns a connection between what he writes and what Moses wrote in Genesis 1, “In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth.”

John 1:19-51 then unfolds a momentous week of Jesus’ public ministry, making careful note of the days. We leave it to Leon Morris to more fully comment in his commentary *The Gospel of John*: “The first day is taken up with a deputation from Jerusalem which interrogates the Baptist. ‘On the morrow’ we have John’s public pointing out of Jesus (29-34). Day 3 tells of two disciples of the

Baptist who followed Jesus (35-40). It seems probable that we should take v. 41 to refer to day 4.... It tells of Andrew’s bringing of Peter to Jesus. Day 5 (43-51) is the day when Philip and Nathanael come to Him. There are no events recorded on day 6, but the marriage in Cana is two days after the previous incident (2:1-11). If we are correct in thus seeing the happenings of one momentous week set forth at the beginning of

**In his Systematic Theology, nineteenth century Princeton Seminary professor Charles Hodge states, “The words of Scripture are to be taken in their plain historical sense. That is, they must be taken in the sense attached to them in the age and by the people to whom they were addressed. This only assumes that the sacred writers were honest, and meant to be understood.”**

this gospel, we must go on to ask what significance is to be attached to this beginning. The parallel with the days of creation in Genesis 1 suggests itself, and is reinforced by the ‘In the beginning,’ which opens both chapters.”<sup>3</sup>

Both Genesis and John focus on the works of Christ, Genesis on the beginning of His creation, John on the commencement of His earthly, public ministry. Both in their own way deal with the epic proportion of His works. Both describe what took place over a course of six days. If the actions of Christ assuredly took place over the course of six ordinary days, then by what logic, by what justification can we understand the “days” of creation as involving millions of years?

If the week of such epic importance here in John is a week of six 24-hour days, is it not altogether natural that it should indirectly reinforce that the stupendous days of Genesis 1 were six literal days?

### The Miracles

In the chapter on “Miracles” in *The Christian View of Man*, J. Gresham Machen asks the question, “...did God’s work of creation take place all in one act at the very beginning, so that after that initial act all God’s works in the universe are works of providence and none of them are works of creation?”<sup>4</sup>

In defense of supernatural miracles, he answers in part, “There is no reason whatever why anyone who really believes in creation should regard as impossible an entrance into the world already created of God’s creative power. What God has done once, He obviously can do again. He acted independently of the course of nature when He created the course of nature in the first place. He may, therefore, act in equal independence of the course of nature at any time when He will.”<sup>5</sup>

As Machen develops the chapter, it is clear that he sees miracles as a species of God doing again what He did in the original creation. Seen in that light, the miracles of the Bible are the closest analogy that we have to the acts of God in the Genesis creation account.

It will be observed that the miracle accounts of both Old and New Testaments do not transpire over vast periods of time, but with suddenness, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. When the woman with the issue of blood touched the garment of Jesus, “...straightway [immediately] the fountain of her blood was dried up” (Mark 5:29). Jesus said to the 12-year-old dead girl, “... Damsel, I say unto thee

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# THE MAJESTIC MARCH OF DAYS

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arise. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked” (Mark 5:41,42). When Jesus was in Decapolis and dealt with the deaf and mute man, he only had to say, “Ephphatha, that is, be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain” (Mark 7:34,35).

Jesus did His miracles with speed and with ease. The centurion at Capernaum who applied to Jesus for the healing of his servant said, “... but speak the word only and my servant shall be healed” (Matthew 8:8). Jesus had but to speak and it was done. In the Genesis creation, God had but to speak and it was done straightway. The miracles of Christ being performed with immediacy and with but a command being analogous to the creation, in our view, favors the literal six-day creation brought to pass simply by, “and God said ... and it was so.”

## Rule of Scripture Interpretation

In his *Systematic Theology*, nineteenth century Princeton Seminary professor Charles Hodge states, “The words of Scripture are to be taken in their plain historical sense. That is, they must be taken in the sense attached to them in the age and by the people to whom they were addressed. This only assumes that the sacred writers were honest, and meant to be understood”<sup>6</sup>

In another place in the same volume, Hodge comments on the subject of creation: “... when the question is asked, How long was the universe in passing from its chaotic to its ordered state? ...” He answers, “According to the more obvious interpretation of the first chapter of Genesis, this work was accomplished in six days. This therefore has been

the common belief of Christians. It is a belief founded on a given interpretation of the Mosaic record....”<sup>7</sup>

We pause to state the opinion that the “common interpretation,” as Hodge calls it, is in keeping with the first rule of interpretation (that Hodge himself articulates), that is, “the words of Scripture are to be taken in their plain historical sense.”

However, Hodge goes on immediately to say, “... which interpretation, however, must be controlled, not only by the laws of language, but by facts.”<sup>8</sup> It is evident that the “facts” he has in mind are especially geological facts. He states, “The geological objections to the Mosaic record are apparently the most serious. According to the commonly received chronology, our globe has existed only a few thousand years. According to the geologists, it must have existed for countless ages.”<sup>9</sup>

We have no difficulty with that statement, as long as it is understood that the “facts” also have to be interpreted. Not all professional, trained geologists subscribe to an earth “countless ages” old. Some, as those connected with Ken Ham’s Answers in Genesis and those of the Creation Research Society, think the geological “facts” support a young earth. Scripture and science do not have to collide on the length of the creation days. Both can be soundly interpreted in favor of the literal, 24-hour days of the creation week.

## The Importance of the Length of the Creation Day

James observes, “how great a matter a little fire kindleth!” (James 3:5). Solomon laments, “the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines” (Song of Solomon 2:15). Both men’s allusions point to the great damage that can eventuate from small things. We wonder if acceptance of something like the day-age theory can soften the mind to even greater errors. That good and godly men may accept

that view does not mean that it cannot ignite a fire that erupts into views far more inimical to a solid faith.

Those who believe in the day-age theory seem like those who believe climate change is caused by humans and can be controlled by humans. They consider any who do not believe it as pitifully bereft of knowledge. However, there are many theologians, past and present, as well as a good number of degreed, professional scientists, who firmly and knowledgeably espouse the six literal solar days view. While some may look upon the young earth view as a departure from the established facts of science, I consider those who subscribe to the day-age theory (theory, we say, because no scientist or theologian was on hand to witness the creation event) as having an impoverished view<sup>10</sup> of God’s creation, which took place in what has been called “the majestic march of days” — six ordinary solar days! •

<sup>1</sup>Westminster Shorter Catechism Question 9.

<sup>2</sup>J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*, p. 100, the MacMillan Co., 1923.

<sup>3</sup>Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmann Publishing Co., 1971), pp. 129,130.

<sup>4</sup>J. Gresham Machen, *The Christian View of Man* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmann Publishing, 1947), p. 113.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>6</sup>Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmann Publishing Company, 1975), p. 187.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 557.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 557-558.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 570.

<sup>10</sup>J. Gresham Machen uses the phrase “serious impoverishment” in reference to Arminianism (as opposed to Calvinism) in his book *Christianity and Liberalism* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1923), p. 51.



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## "SHALL YE POSSESS THE LAND?"

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claim them." The problem is that the land of Israel was never given to every Jew in every time. All the Jews of all times were not given the land of Israel. Only certain ones were given the land of Israel and will have the land of Israel.

That is the problem of grabbing promises out of the Bible and claiming them. The promises of the Bible are given to certain people at certain times. Here, the land was given to certain descendants of Abraham, but not all the descendants. And for the "name it and claim it" people, it is not so much what God wills, so far

as what they get to claim, but what THEY will — "I have decided that I am going to claim the land of Israel. I am going to claim these promises of health and wealth today."

One of the great Pentecostal preachers in Brazil today puts out a Bible. On the front cover, it says it is "The Financial Prosperity Bible." He believes and teaches the gospel of prosperity. He believes and teaches that all Christians should be prosperous financially at all times. But, that is never promised to us in the Bible. God has promised that certain people, certain Christians, will be prosperous financially at certain times; but, not all of them all the time. That's what the problem is with the gospel of prosperity and "name it and claim it."

God has promised to supply all our needs. He has promised to give us food and raiment. We are supposed to be content with His provision. But, he hasn't promised to give us financial prosperity. God has promised to give us spiritual prosperity. He has promised to bless us spiritually. Many times He will bless us financially, but not all the time. We cannot just claim that on a blanket basis for all Christians.

And here they say, "we are many. The land is given us for an inheritance." We go on to verse 25: "Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood: and shall

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## "SHALL YE POSSESS THE LAND?"

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ye possess the land? Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every one his neighbour's wife: and shall ye possess the land?" Here God says that they were not going to get those promises of the land: "Shall ye possess the land?" Aside from the fact that they might not be the ones who were chosen to possess the land, even if they were living for the Lord, God points out that these people were not even living for Him. They were living in sin. He lists the sins they were committing. They were eating with the blood. In the Old Testament and in Acts 15 we are told not to eat with the blood.

They were lifting up their eyes toward their idols. They were living in idolatry. They were worshipping idols of wood, stone, gold and silver. Today we don't have those idols around, but we have the idols of money, cars, houses, jobs, family. There are all kinds of idols that we have in our lives that we lift up and exalt more than God.

These people in Ezekiel's day had their idols. They had their eating with the blood. They shed blood. They stood upon their sword. They were committing violence in the land, trying to take away things that belonged to other people, stealing from other people by violence, and yet they were there claiming the promises of God.

What happens with many in the Pentecostal movement today? They make blanket statements to all the people of prosperity. They not only promise financial prosperity. They promise physical prosperity, being well, that God never wants them to be sick. It doesn't matter how the people are living. It doesn't matter if they are living for the Lord or not. They are still given the promises they

want to hear. They want to hear that God is going to give them what they want and the people claim these promises.

Ezekiel says that they "work[ed] abomination." One of the greatest abominations talked about in the Bible is homosexuality. There were probably some of them there involved in that. They also "defile[d] everyone his neighbor's wife." They

**God has promised to supply all our needs. He has promised to give us food and raiment. We are supposed to be content with His provision.**

were living in adultery. And, yet, they wanted to claim the promises of God for themselves. But God asked: "... shall ye possess the land?"

Then Ezekiel says in verse 27: "Say thou thus unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; As I live, surely they that are in the wastes shall fall by the sword, and him that is in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured, and they that be in the forts and in the caves shall die of the pestilence." Here the Lord promises that rather than prosperity, they were going to have desolation. They were going to have the sword come upon them, the enemy come upon them. They were going to have beasts of the field come upon them and devour them.

When we were traveling, we stopped by a museum in Chicago and saw two lions that had devoured 140 people in Africa. Of course they are stuffed today. If you were to loose 100 lions like that, it would be a great judgment upon a people. And here, God said he was going to loose those beasts upon them. The ones who had gotten into the forts and caves, away from the sword and the beasts, were going to get the pestilence, and disease, and God was go-

ing to completely devour them — instead of giving them prosperity.

Then, verse 28 states: "For I will lay the land most desolate, and the pomp of her strength shall cease; and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, that none shall pass through." "The pomp of her strength shall cease." In Brazil today, and also in the United States, these preachers of prosperity have huge churches — the pomp of their strength. They have thousands and thousands of people. They seem to have a lot of strength. They have a lot of people following them, but God is going to lay that all low. He is going to bring that all to naught. They are not serving the Lord. In today's world around us, we have come to the place where the Bible says "they will not endure sound doctrine." Even people who name the name of Christ "will not endure [much] sound doctrine."

In the Bible Presbyterian Church, we are Presbyterian Fundamentalists. Presbyterian Fundamentalists are scarcer than hen's teeth. There are hardly any of them around. I believe the reason for that is that people will endure some sound doctrine, but they will not endure too much of it. But, people will endure every kind of false doctrine. And here we are told that "the pomp of their strength shall cease."

I have an article telling how one of these television prosperity preachers bought a \$65 million jet to carry himself around. Even the news media could see what a sham that was. He says that God told him to buy the plane. When he was criticized for this, he said: "If I want to believe God for a \$65 million plane, you cannot stop me." It says that he has a couple of Rolls Royces and a couple of million dollar mansions. This guy preaches the gospel of prosperity — the exact thing we are looking at in Ezekiel 33. He preaches "name it and claim it."

Do you know who really gets the prosperity. It is the prosperity preach-

er. He gets plenty of prosperity, and the people get a few scraps, if they are lucky. But God proclaims desolation to “the pomp of their strength.” He has all kinds of stuff. He puffs himself up with “the pomp of his strength.” But, God will lay all of that desolate.

We Presbyterian Fundamentalists do not have much strength. We do not have much pomp. We have just a little strength, like the Church of Philadelphia in the book of Revelation. We have a little strength, and God can use us.

Verse 29 continues: “Then shall they know that I am the Lord, when I have laid the land most desolate because of all their abominations which they have committed.” Ezekiel uses this phrase often. When will they know that He is the Lord? When everything goes to pot. When everything becomes desolate, they are going to know that God is the Lord, and that He laid all things desolate because of all their abominations which they had done.

We have these huge churches in Brazil, with tens of thousands of people in them, and yet the society in Brazil is in terrible shape. Crime is rampant there. They literally get away with murder. Security was a continuing prayer request for us while living in Brazil. We had missionary friends who lived just a couple of miles from us. They were brutally robbed, tied up, and beaten for three hours in their home. Finally, their mission board told them they could not stay in Brazil, because it was too unsafe.

We have all this crime in Brazil, all the wickedness on every side. Brazil has the largest homosexual, gay parade in the world. In São Paulo, where we live, they have over a million people come out every year for the gay parade. There is all this sin everywhere, and yet everyone is a “Christian.” If these huge churches were true, if everyone were living for the Lord, you would be able to see a difference in the society around you.

Back in the day when Billy Sunday would go into a town for a revival meeting, the bars in that town would shut down. There would be a difference in the town, in the society. But today we don’t have that, with these huge churches.

Let us go on to verse 30: “Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying,

**“And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.”**

Ezekiel 33:31

Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord.” Here we have these people, that are “naming and claiming” it, saying they are Christians, wanting to look like Christians, but at the same time they are talking against Ezekiel. What do you suppose they were saying against Ezekiel?

I’m sure they were saying that Ezekiel was too narrow. He’s too much of a legalist. He’s just too much. But, they did come to hear him, probably because he was the only one to go hear. They said, “Come, let us hear what Ezekiel has to say.”

They looked like Christians on the surface. They said they were Christians. But what did God have to say about it. Verse 31: “And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but

their heart goeth after their covetousness.” And so, we have all these people who look like Christians on the surface. They even quote Scripture. Do you know that even the devil quotes Scripture. At the temptation of Christ, the devil was quoting Scripture.

I believe there is demonic influence in some of the Pentecostalism in Brazil. They are not all demonic. There are Christians in the Pentecostal movement, but they do have demonic influences with their healings, with their speaking in tongues, their falling down backwards, and so forth.

They come to the church as Christians, they sit down in the church as God’s people, but they aren’t God’s people. How can you tell if they are God’s people or not? In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ said: “By their fruit ye shall know them.” And here, “with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.” It is easy to say things with the mouth. It is a lot harder to put things into action.

I remember when we served in Cameroon, that country was listed as one of the most corrupt nations in the world. The news media there and the President of the country always talked about “the war on corruption.” But, it was just talk. Nothing was ever done about it. They thought that just talking about “the war on corruption” was all they had to do.

A lot of people think that all they have to do is talk about the Lord. “... With their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.” They are not really interested in the things of the Lord. They are interested in getting money. They are interested in the things of this world in covetousness.

We like to visit our grandchildren. One of our little grandsons has a new favorite word: “more.” “I want more! More!” “More candy!”

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## "SHALL YE POSSESS THE LAND?"

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"More playing!" "More toys!" "I want more!" This little two-year-old is just like the adults all around us — and us as well — many times. We always want more. The Bible says: "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver ..." (Ecclesiastes 5:10). We always want more. Well, that is what Ezekiel says about the children of Israel at this time: "their hearts went after their covetousness."

We go on to verse 32: "And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not." The people would come there. They would look like Christians on the surface. They would say they are Christians. They would come to the church meetings with Ezekiel. They would hear his words. But the words of Ezekiel would go in one ear, and right out the other one. They would just ignore what Ezekiel would say to them. They only picked out of what he said what they wanted to hear.

The mark of a false prophet is that he tells people what they want to hear. A true prophet tells people what they don't want to hear. We should be telling people what they need to hear, not just what they want to hear. The people would come hear Ezekiel. They would hear what they wanted to hear. As people go to the big prosperity churches today, they hear what they want to hear. They have everything as they want to have it. They don't have any application. In these churches, there is very little application of God's Word. It is just about what God is going to give to them — more and more and more things. There is not much about service. There is not much about sin.

That's how it is with a lot of the new music in the churches. God said

**It is good to witness to people who refuse our witness just as Ezekiel witnessed to these people and they refused his witness. It is because God expects us to be witnesses for Him. We are made watchmen. We are supposed to give people warning from the Lord, that God's judgment is coming and we need to get right with the Lord and turn to Him.**

that Ezekiel, "as a very lovely song, or one playing an instrument, they hear thy words, but do them not."

Then, verse 33: "And when this [desolation] cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them." What good did it do for Ezekiel to preach to them, when they ignored what he said, when they wouldn't do what he said? One good is right here — that they would be held accountable for what Ezekiel said to them.

I am a firm believer in giving out tracts. Tracts are the easiest way to witness. It is the easiest way to open up a conversation with someone about the things of the Lord. It is the easiest way to witness to someone who we do not even see, or people that we just see for a couple minutes. What good does it do to give people tracts that they just throw away? What good does it do to try to give tracts to people who refuse them? Well, they are going to be held accountable by the Lord, that they refused His Word. That is part of our business as Christians, being God's messengers here on this earth, whether they will hear or not.

And, so, the people here in Ezekiel's time, in chapter 33, heard his

preaching, and they knew that a prophet had been among them. Let's go back to verses 7 through 9 of this same chapter: "So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."

Here in verses 7 through 9 is another reason it is good to give tracts to people who refuse them, people that throw them away. It is good to witness to people who refuse our witness just as Ezekiel witnessed to these people and they refused his witness. It is because God expects us to be witnesses for Him. We are made watchmen. We are supposed to give people warning from the Lord, that God's judgment is coming and we need to get right with the Lord and turn to Him.

We have good news — Good News from the Lord — and we need to be giving that out. God will make people accountable at the very least from our witness, and we will deliver our soul.

"Name it and claim it." That describes much of the preaching today from the prosperity preachers. That is likewise what we see in Ezekiel 33 among those who disobeyed the Lord. Instead of prosperity, Ezekiel asks, "Shall ye possess the land?" •



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