

# REDEEMING THE TIME

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

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*"Death is swallowed up  
in victory!"*

BY BRAD K. GSELL

Believers have always been comforted by the precious promise that after death they shall live in heaven with their Saviour for all eternity, and thus escape the wrath of God in eternal torment in hell.

However, there has sometimes been confusion as to the details of these matters of what happens to our souls and bodies after death. This confusion often can be traced back to the erroneous teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and the influence of the mythology of the ancient world which crept into some sections of the church.

Such Catholic inventions as purgatory, *limbus patrum* and *limbus infantum* also violate clear Bible teaching and teach a dastardly doctrine that good works and baptism are still needed at death before one can enter into their heavenly abode.

In recent years, even some in Fundamentalist and Reformed circles have begun to espouse a more complex understanding of these matters, which we do not believe is warranted. Hopefully, this brief study will be a blessing to all of God's people.

## What exactly happens to believers and unbelievers when they die?

The Apostle Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 5:8: "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

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## So, what's **WRONG** with **EQUALITY?**

*The 2021 Equality Act:  
Assault on Religious Liberty*

BY BRAD K. GSELL

On February 25, 2021, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the so-called "Equality Act" by a vote of 224-206. Certainly everyone is for equality! Right? We proudly state in our Pledge of Allegiance that all American citizens should have "liberty and justice for all."

However, this deceptively titled legislation is far more sinister than its nice-sounding title. If approved by the Senate and signed by the President of the United States, it will be a serious attack on freedom — and produce INEQUALITY and INJUSTICE.

With the time it takes to produce and mail each issue of *Redeeming the Time*, we cannot be sure at what stage in its move to final passage it will be when you read this. But, it really makes little difference, since the points in this article are very important to Bible-believing Christians living in the United States. That a majority of United States congressmen would vote to pass it is of grave concern. Further, similar legislation keeps being introduced (e.g. The Equality Act of 2019). If it doesn't pass this time, we can know for sure that something sim-

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and to be present  
with the Lord."*

2 CORINTHIANS 5:8



# The Scottish Reformation

## PART 2

BY MARK W. EVANS

EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND

### The Foe and the Victor

In February 1528, Archbishop James Beaton fulfilled his hellish plot of burning Patrick Hamilton at the stake. The martyr patiently endured the flame and sealed his testimony to God's truth with his life. His preaching and example struck at the heart of Rome's ecclesiastical superstition and tyranny. While others protested Rome's immorality, greed, and insufferable arrogance, the faithful preacher also proclaimed God's truth of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

For many centuries, the papacy kept the sacred Scriptures from laymen and clergymen. Rome insisted that God's Word must remain in a dead language. Those who attempted to declare its actual words and teachings faced severe persecution. For example, the Lollards, who propagated John Wycliffe's English translation, were burned at the stake with their Bibles chained to their necks. Bible knowledge was limited by monks and priests who cited brief passages mixed in with superstitious ranting and fanciful storytelling. Even doctors of theology were ignorant of the contents of the sacred Book.

Patrick Hamilton's faithful preaching of God's Word was in sharp contrast with the clergy's ignorant utterances. The impact of Hamilton's testimony

caused Archbishop Beaton's attendant to suggest, "My lord, if you burn any more, except you follow my counsel, you will utterly destroy yourselves. If you will burn them, let them be burned in hollow cellars, for the smoke of Mr. Patrick Hamilton has infected as many as it blew upon."<sup>1</sup> Church historian J.A. Wylie wrote of Hamilton: "[H]is death was one of

**Following the martyrdom of Patrick Hamilton, the Roman clerics sought to annihilate Protestantism in Scotland. They determined to set before the population the dreadful sight of execution by the fiery stake. However, the public burnings increased the number of converts.**

the most powerful of the instrumentalities that worked for the emancipation of his native land. It was around his stake that the first decided dawn of Scotland's Reformation took place."<sup>2</sup>

The papists' thirst for Protestant blood was not without reason. Their place of authority and acquisition of wealth were being threatened. Thomas McCrie, in his book, *The Story of the Scottish Church*, wrote: "The corruption by which the Christian religion was universally depraved before the Refor-

mation had grown to a greater height in Scotland than in any other nation within the pale of the Western church. Superstition and religious imposture, in their grossest forms, gained an easy admission among a rude and ignorant people. By means of these, the clergy attained to an exorbitant degree of opulence and power; which were accompanied, as they always have been, with the corruption of their order, and of the whole system of religion."<sup>3</sup>

McCrie also wrote of Rome's false dogmas: "Of the doctrine of Christianity, scarce anything remained but the name. Instead of being directed to offer up their adorations to one God, the people were taught to divide them among an innumerable company of inferior objects. A plurality of mediators shared the honor of procuring the divine favor with the 'one Mediator between God and man'; and more petitions were presented to the virgin Mary and other saints, than to 'Him whom the Father heareth always.'"<sup>4</sup>

Following the martyrdom of Patrick Hamilton, the Roman clerics sought to annihilate Protestantism in Scotland. They determined to set before the population the dreadful sight of execution by the fiery stake. However, the public burnings increased the number of converts. For every one that was burned, a new gathering would arise.

After Archbishop James Beaton's death, his uncle, Archbishop David Beaton, took his place and zealously continued the persecution. The martyrs were numerous. In the year 1538, five professing Christians were condemned to the stake on the same afternoon of their trial. They were placed upon a hill to be plainly seen. Throughout Scotland the accounts of suffering believers rightly made Rome abominable in their sight. Humble martyrs were admired for their perseverance and bold testimonies. A year after the five martyrs, two Protestants were called to suffer unto death for the crime of believing the Bible. Jerome Russel, a Friar, and Alexander Kennedy, a gentleman of Ayrshire,

**Although persecutions would continue ... the Lord's sovereign intervention had begun and the Scriptures took root in many hearts. The One we serve is "Faithful and True" and His name is called "King of kings and Lord of lords." "Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed."**

were tried before Beaton, condemned and the next day burned at the stake. While at the stake, Russel grasped the hand of Kennedy and said, "Death cannot destroy us, seeing our Lord and Master has already destroyed it."<sup>5</sup>

In 1543, Cardinal Beaton traveled his diocese to demonstrate his unrestrained authority "by hanging, burning, and in some cases drowning heretics, in the towns where it pleased him to set up his tribunal."<sup>6</sup> He also determined to eliminate 100 of the nobility who favored Reformation doctrines. However, the Lord intervened. The army of Scotland was utterly defeated at the Solway, and Scotland's King James V, crushed in spirit, passed away. Cardinal Beaton's list of one hundred noblemen was found on his person.

Wylie wrote: "The man whose name was first on the list of nobles marked for slaughter, was chosen to the regency, although Cardinal Beaton sought to bar his way to it by producing a forged will of the late king appointing himself to the post. The fact that Arran was a professed Reformer contributed quite as much to his elevation as the circumstance of his being premier peer."<sup>7</sup> Arran chose chaplains of the reformed faith, Thomas Guillem and John Rough. They boldly proclaimed the doctrines of Scripture and exposed the errors of the papists.

The most significant of the regent's measures was the passing of an Act of Parliament, March 15, 1543,

making it lawful to read the Bible in one's own language. John Knox wrote: "Then might have been seen the Bible lying almost upon every gentleman's table. The New Testament was borne about in many man's hands. We grant, that some (alas!) profaned that blessed word; for some that, perchance, had never read ten sentences in it, had it most common in their hand.... Albeit we say that many abused that liberty granted of God miraculously, yet thereby did the knowledge of God wondrously increase, and God gave his Holy Spirit to simple men in great abundance. There were set forth works in our own tongue, besides those that came from England, and did disclose the pride, the craft, and tyranny, and abuses of that Roman Antichrist."<sup>8</sup>

Although persecutions would continue, including the martyrdom of George Wishart, before whom John Knox carried his sword, the Lord's sovereign intervention had begun and the Scriptures took root in many hearts. The One we serve is "Faithful and True" and His name is called "King of kings and Lord of lords." "Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed." •

<sup>1</sup>David Calderwood, *The History of the Kirk of Scotland*, Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Wodrow Society, 1842), pp. 85, 86. This quote is rewritten in modern spelling.

<sup>2</sup>J.A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism*, Vol. III (London: Cassell and Company, n.d. [originally published, 1878]), p. 477.

<sup>3</sup>Thomas McCrie, *The Story of the Scottish Church* (Glasgow: Bell and Bain, n.d.), p. 8.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup>Wylie, p. 479.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 100-101.



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## Present With the Lord

**M**RS. EVELYN RICKER, beloved missionary with The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions, went to be with her Saviour on December 18, 2020. She was first appointed to serve by the Board in 1956. Her 64 years of service makes her the second longest-serving Board missionary — only surpassed by her husband, the Rev. Hal Ricker, who is still in active missionary service in Guatemala.

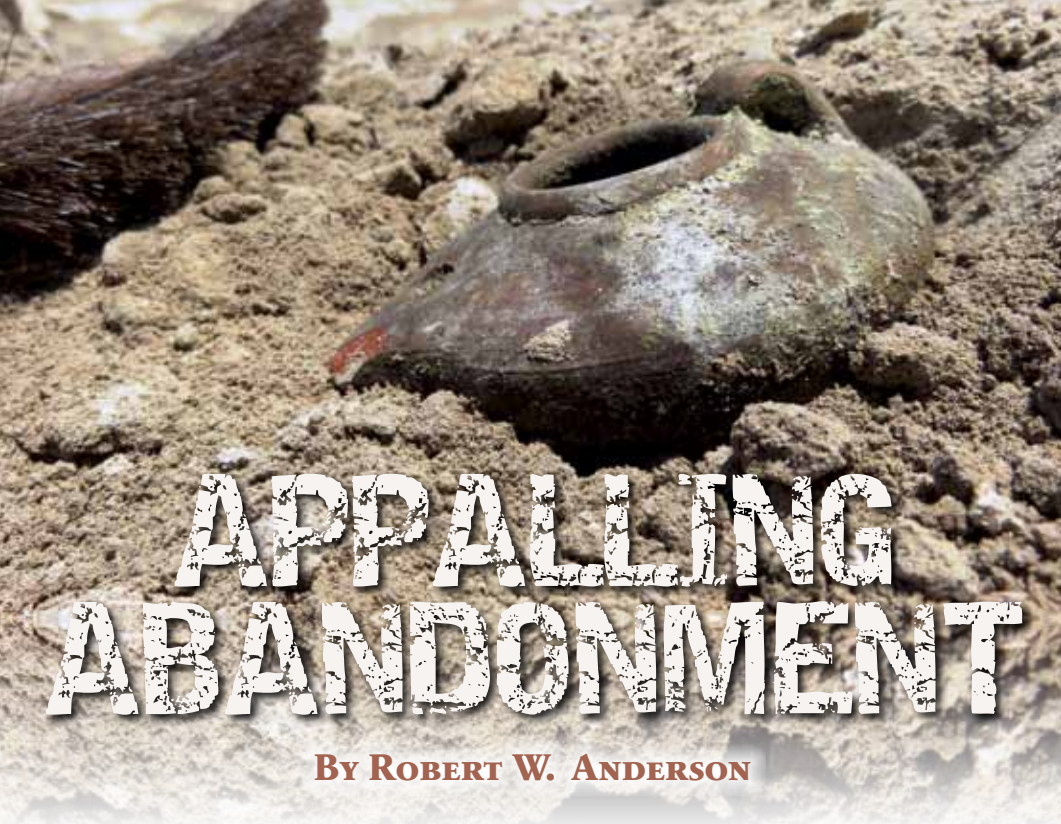


She and her husband first served in Brazil, before being called to Guatemala in 1963. The photo on this page is of the Rickers displaying a memento at the celebration honoring their 50 years of service in Guatemala in 2013.

Evelyn selflessly gave of her talents to lead souls to Christ, and disciple Christians. The Lord graced her with many talents. She was a tireless wife and mother, used her training as a practical nurse, wrote vocal and instrumental music, wrote poetry, played the piano and sang in worship services in many churches, led ladies' Bible classes, taught countless Sunday school classes, and participated in over 80 vacation Bible schools! In addition, she helped with other parts of their ministry, such as the Trinitarian Bible Society Bookstore in Guatemala City and with various meetings of the International Council of Christian Churches.

The love for her Saviour was easily seen as she reached out to people of all ages and in varied situations with the message of salvation and living a holy life pleasing to God. The imprint of her joyous Christian spirit was pressed on the hearts of everyone she met — in the United States, Brazil, Guatemala, and around the world. •

*"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints"* (Psalm 116:15).



# APPALLING ABANDONMENT

BY ROBERT W. ANDERSON

**I**n Judges 10 we read of an unusual response by God to Israel's repeated apostasy.

Scripture bulges with statements asserting Israel's enjoyment of a most favored nation status with God. He told them, "... thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself ..." (Deuteronomy 7:6).

## God's blessings to Israel

**Among the favors God bestowed on Israel are the leaders He gave them.**

"He sent Moses his servant; and Aaron whom he had chosen" (Psalm 105:26). From the burning bush, He said to Moses, "I am come down to deliver them [Israel] out of the land of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey ..." (Exodus 3:8). Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy and Joshua especially are an unparalleled documentary of God's deliverance of Israel and its escort to the land of promise.

**To Israel's history belongs the gift of God's covenant and law.** "He hath

remembered his covenant forever ... which covenant he made with Abraham, And his oath unto Isaac; And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant" (Psalm 105:8-10). "[W]hat nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day" (Deuteronomy 4:8)? "He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them ..." (Psalm 147:19,20).

**Israel received the gift of the land of Canaan**, where they might serve God and enjoy his myriad blessings. God's relation to Israel is likened to that of a marriage: Israel the wife, God the husband. The Promised Land was a wedding present from God to the nation, "a good land, a land of brooks of waters ... A land of wheat and barley, and vines, and fig trees," and so forth (Deuteronomy 8:7,8).

In short, it was a land of tremendous natural resources. But it was not an untamed wilderness, as America was when the Pilgrims came to its shore: "... it shall be, when the Lord thy God

shall have brought thee into the land ... to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildest not, And houses full of all good things, which thou fillest not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedest not ..." (Deuteronomy 6:10,11).

With all that God said, the half had not been told. They were not given a land with a huge mortgage to be paid off with onerous monthly payments. It was given free and clear. They were not faced with the enormous task of building an infrastructure from scratch. Wicked as the Canaanites were, God had employed their gifts to prepare the land for His people. Was a bride ever carried across a threshold into living quarters such as Israel in the day God "carried" her across the Jordan into the land she was given as a marriage present?

## Israel's sin and God's deliverance

But sadly, Israel soon divorced herself from the God who gave her "the pleasant land" (see Jeremiah 3:19; Zechariah 7:14), the same land they desecrated by their practice of innumerable sins. God's favor on them did not mean they could "get away with anything," as is sometimes said of a spoiled child. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: *therefore* [emphasis mine] I will punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos 3:2).

In the histories of the judges in the book of Judges, such as Othniel (3:7-11), Ehud (3:12-30), Deborah (4-5), and Gideon (6-8), there is a recurrent record of Israel's apostasy from God (3:7, 3:12, 4:1, 6:1). God became angry at the nation for their desertion of Him and His covenant, and gave them over to varying periods of grinding suffering at the hands of their adversaries. Thus afflicted, the nation would pray to God for mercy and deliverance (3:9; 3:15; 4:3; 6:7). Each time God would hear them and raise up a judge for their rescue (3:9; 3:15).

But in Judges 10 there is a momentary interruption in the recitation of the events that hold sway throughout the book. Against the landscape of Israel's extraordinary history, rooted all the way back to Genesis, they "did evil *again* [emphasis mine] in the sight of the LORD" (verse 6). Instead of worshipping and serving the One who had revealed and demonstrated Himself to be the only true God, their Creator and Savior, they "served Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the Lord, and served him not" (10:6).

Both Baal and Ashtaroth were gods of the fertility cults of Canaan. The *Holman Bible Dictionary* defines a fertility cult as "a general term for religions marked by rites which reenact a myth accounting for the orderly change of the seasons and the earth's fruitfulness."<sup>1</sup> Wedded to these observances were practices of the most wretched immorality. All the beliefs and evil practices of the false religions to which Israel deserted entailed a grievous insult to God.

It has been suggested that, when "the Israelites entered Canaan, they found a land of farmers, not shepherds, as they had been in the wilderness. The land was fertile beyond anything the Hebrews had ever seen. The Canaanites attributed this fertility to their god Baal, and that is where the Israelites' problems began. Could the God who had led them out of Egypt through the wilderness also provide fertile farms in the Promised Land? Or, would the fertility god of Canaan have to be honored?"<sup>2</sup>

Whatever the secondary reasons, Scripture invariably traces the real impetus not simply to external conditions (*i.e.* a land for farming, not shepherding), but to idolatry, the inward man of the heart, a heart so "desperately wicked, who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). As Paul verified in Galatians 5:19,20, he included "idolatry"

among the "works of the flesh," — the fallen, depraved nature.

The Second Commandment forbids much more than simply the worship of graven (carved) images. It forbids the worship of God "in any other way not appointed in his word" (Westminster Shorter Catechism Q51). Idolatry includes all corrupt and false worship.

**God said to let the idols "deliver you in the time of your tribulations" (verse 14). How does this apply to our lives? Paul wrote about Israel's history to the Corinthian church, "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters" (I Corinthians 10:6-7a). With the words, "these things were our examples," Paul stretches what happened in the days of Moses all the way to the church of Corinth's day. In like manner, what transpired in the days of the Judges is to be stretched to our time, as an example to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things and to warn us away from idolatry.**

Spread out before us is Israel's shameless, rampant practice of idolatry. In recent times we have heard much about "high crimes and misdemeanors," but infinitely greater than such alleged wrongs is the worship of false gods.

About 500 years after the judges, the prophet Jeremiah would encapsulate

the wickedness and folly of idolatry in these words, "Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD. For my people have committed two evils [notice: not just one, but two evils]; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jeremiah 2:11-13).

In every generation and among every people there has been that same mindless, conscienceless disregard of idolatry, the fountain of all evils, which was found in the days of the judges and again in the days of the prophets.

### God punishes Israel

What did God do about their evil? "And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon. And that year they vexed and oppressed the children of Israel" (Judges 10:7-8). His anger was "hot": "... who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?" (Psalm 76:7).

He exhibited that anger by delivering Israel into the hands of many enemies. Judges 10 tells us that Israel was "vexed and oppressed" (verse 8), and also "sore distressed" (verse 9). He beat the nation with their own stick, by their own sins. It was like the days of Jeremiah, who said to Judah, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall prove thee" (Jeremiah 2:19).

Likely Israel thought that by falling in with the worship of the gods of the surrounding nations, she would not only harvest better crops, but also earn the friendship of the worshippers of those gods. That did not happen. Instead, the idol worshipping nations "vexed and oppressed," sorely "dis-

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tressed,” and troubled her. These verses weep with her tears, echo her groans.

Israel’s suffering from her idolatrous neighbors went on for 18 protracted years (Judges 10:8), and on both sides of the Jordan. “Moreover the children of Ammon passed over Jordan to fight also against Judah, and against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim; so that Israel was sore distressed” (verse 9).

As always before, Israel cried again to God for rescue. “And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, saying, We have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim” (verse 10). This verse could elicit a sigh of relief. Israel is repentant; Israel is sorry for her sins. But, both the Bible and experience teach us that confession of sin can be for the wrong reasons: not because of hatred and godly sorrow for wrongdoing, but on account of being caught in sin and having to pay for it. If their enemies had not oppressed them, we get the sense that Israel would have gone on happily in its idolatry.

### God refuses to deliver Israel after repeated sin

In verses 11 through 14 we see God’s surprising response to their cry, an interruption to the pattern of the past. Where previously God had sent a deliverer, a judge, he now rejects them; he sends them back to the gods for which they had opted: “And the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Did not I deliver you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines? The Zidonians also, and the Amalekites, and the Maonites, did oppress you; and ye cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand. Yet ye have forsaken me, and served oth-

er gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.”

With those words, as we say, all the oxygen goes out of the room! From now on heaven will be excruciatingly silent. Just when their prayers for deliverance have grown to a crescendo,

**At this juncture in our nation’s history, a prosperous economy is not the only thing, nor even the principle thing, to seek or for which to be thankful. There should be an ardent, sincere prayer for God to use the events and philosophies that are dividing our nation to stir us to godly sorrow. We might despair that the current mindset and lifestyle may never change, but “with God nothing shall be impossible” (Luke 1:37).**

God shows Himself deaf. God’s ultimatum: “I will deliver you no more,” seems to imply some fault in their prayer, as if they imagined they could simply mouth the right expressions and a favorable reply would be assured.

“Lord, Lord” would not suffice! Israel’s abandonment by her God is a horrific abandonment. It would be like the darkness of Egypt, a “darkness that could be felt.” No answer, no hope, no deliverance. From here on, heaven would be silent to their petitions. God’s Word here parallels His words in Hosea, “Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone” (Hosea 4:17); or Christ’s words about the Pharisees, “Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind” (Matthew 15:14); or Paul’s assertions about the pagan, Gentile world, “God gave them

up ...” (Romans 1:24,26), “God gave them over ...” (Romans 1:28).

Can people ever be more alone than when they are left alone by God? It seems a foretaste of the sufferings of the condemned in the place of eternal torment, where all good shall be denied, even the drop of water from a fingertip.

There is a depth and height to their misery of abandonment that passes knowledge. When did a congregation ever hear a sermon of such dire utterances? God’s abandonment was a knife sharp warning against expecting help based on the experience of past mercies. “Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins” (Psalm 19:13).

An illustration comes to mind. When my wife was teaching a class about Christ’s Olivet discourse, one five year old, with a palpable shudder of his body, exclaimed, “I knew the Bible could teach you things, but I never knew it could make you “fееeel” things!” In this passage, God’s denial of Israel’s prayers makes us “fееeel” things.

God said to let the idols “deliver you in the time of your tribulations” (verse 14). How does this apply to our lives? Paul wrote about Israel’s history to the Corinthian church, “Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters” (1 Corinthians 10:6-7a). With the words, “these things were our examples,” Paul stretches what happened in the days of Moses all the way to the church of Corinth’s day. In like manner, what transpired in the days of the Judges is to be stretched to our time, as an example to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things and to warn us away from idolatry.

Now then, as truly as God gave the land of Canaan to Israel as their dwelling place, so in His providence, He brought the Pilgrim Fathers to these shores. Let their Mayflower Compact speak of their Christian faith and objectives for living in this land. It is an incontrovertible fact that the Bible of our fathers, with its laws and teach-

ings was at the foundation of this nation's institutions. The frequency with which Scriptural words and symbols are inscribed in the stones of public buildings and monuments is salient witness to the dominance and influence of biblical Christianity from the nation's inception.

Just as God's word in the Pentateuch lost its grip on the hearts of the Israelites by the time they got to the book of Judges, so the grip of a Scriptural knowledge and faith in the minds of our nation has been weakened over the passage of time. There is no longer a biblical consensus of faith.

We mention some examples supporting this assertion. *World* magazine reported that 59% is "the share of U.S. adults ages 18-44 who have ever cohabited with a romantic partner."<sup>3</sup> A 59% American practice is undermining heaven's precepts. Still fitting the Bible to our times, we observe that temples and idols of non-Christian religions are springing up all over America.

A recent example of idolatry came out of Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Union tweeted on its official account: "Today in chapel, we confessed to plants. Together, we held our grief, joy, regret, guilt and sorrow in prayer; offering them to the beings who sustain us, but whose gift we too often fail to honor."<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Allan A. MacRae, a highly respected Old Testament scholar (and one of my seminary professors) wrote, "idolatry seems like a relic of past days, yet we must recognize that the majority of mankind today worships something other than the true God. All that is said against idolatry in our passage [Isaiah 40:15-17] is highly relevant to our present situation if we substitute for 'idol' those other objectives or ideals to which men give the honor that should belong to the Creator."<sup>5</sup>

In Judges, Israel experienced extreme suffering from those same nations whose idolatry they had adopted. Suffering remains as the accompaniment of idolatry.

1 Corinthians 10:20 states: "... the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils [demons] and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils." Charles Hodge, commenting on this verse, wrote, "Although their gods have no existence, yet there are real beings, the rulers of the darkness of this world ... on whom their worship terminates.... We are said to have fellowship with those between whom there is congeniality of mind, community of interest and friendly intercourse.... In this sense the worshippers of idols have fellowship with evil spirits, they are united to them so as to form one community, with a common character and a common destiny. Into this state of fellowship they are brought ... by idolatry, which is an act of apostasy from the true God, and an association with the kingdom of darkness."<sup>6</sup>

**God in his grace pours out on sinners "the spirit of grace and supplications" (Zechariah 12:10). "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20). After the threat of abandonment they met with acceptance, just as we who believe are told, "he hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:6), that is, in Christ.**

To what Paul said in 1 Corinthians, add the words of Christ, who told the unbelieving Jews, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the truth.... He is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44). As a result of being united to Satan, their spiritual father, the unbelieving Jews were cruel, inclined to murder and lying against the Lord of glory at the trial and the crucifixion.

The account in Luke 22 of Christ's arrest testifies to the collusion between idolaters and the prince of darkness. Jesus told "the chief priest and captains of the temple and the elders," the "idolatrous" representatives of a corrupt Jewish religion, "this is your hour, and the power of darkness" (verse 53) — referring to Satan. Were the "idolaters" in Judges ever stirred to such cruelty as the Jewish leaders were when they lied against and "killed the Prince of life" (Acts 3:15)?

### Has anything changed?

Has anything changed since those days? Has idolatry/false religion changed? Has the devil changed? Present day idolaters or adherents of false religion are also cruel because of an alignment with demonic forces. How has demonic-inspired false religion contributed to recent heinous terrorist attacks, the evil destruction of infants in the womb, and the bullying that is ever increasing in our day? With our Bible open before us to Judges 10, 1 Corinthians 10 and John 8, who can tell how far demonic activity has insinuated itself into the outworking of daily events?

It remains true that people still "walk according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2). Add the words of 2 Timothy 3:13, "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived."

Should our nation stumble more deeply into a way of thought without God, it may be found crying like Israel, "We have sinned against thee..." (verse 10). What if God would say, "Go and cry unto the gods [the religions, the philosophies, the programs] ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation?" What if the God of heaven said to the United States of America, "No more — I will deliver you no more"?

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## APPALLING ABANDONMENT

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### God delivers Israel after the people offer true repentance and turn from their wicked ways

Thankfully, God's threatened abandonment is not the end of the story in Judges. When the people heard God's words, they did not despair, they did not turn away in an angry pout, venting against God as neither kind nor forgiving. Instead they renewed their cry: "And the children of Israel said again unto the LORD, We have sinned: do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee; deliver us only, we pray thee, this day" (verse 15).

When David sinned against God, he said, "let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man" (2 Samuel 24:14). So, here in Judges 10, however a merciful God might chasten them would be better than continuing under their enemies' crushing tyranny.

The omniscient God ordained and used His apparent rejection of their initial confession and petition to stir them to a fervent and undoubtedly genuine supplication. Along with their prayer came fruit in keeping with true repentance: "And they put away the strange [foreign] gods from among them, and served the LORD" (verse 16a).

Mercy of mercies, God heard their prayer, "and His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel" (verse 16b). Of course God knew what was in their hearts even before they prayed. He Himself excited their prayer. The Psalmist prayed, "quicken us, and we will call upon thy name" (Psalm 80:18).

God in His grace pours out on sinners "the spirit of grace and of supplications" (Zechariah 12:10). "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20). After the threat of abandonment they met with

acceptance, just as we who believe are told, "he hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:6), that is, in Christ.

### Application to the United States and other nations today

At this juncture in our nation's history, a prosperous economy is not the only thing, nor even the principle thing, to seek or for which to be thankful. There should be an ardent, sincere prayer for God to use the events and philosophies that are dividing our nation to stir us to godly sorrow. We might despair that the current mindset and lifestyle may never change, but "with God nothing shall be impossible" (Luke 1:37).

May the Spirit of God use these few verses from Judges to turn our hearts from twenty-first century idols to our God and Savior, and pull us back from the crumbling brink of an appalling abandonment. May our souls recognize the truth of the words of Augustine, "Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee." •

<sup>1</sup><https://www.studylight.org/dictionaries/hbd/f/fertility-cult.html>.

<sup>2</sup>Ray Vander Laan, "The Fertility Cults of Canaan: Yahweh or Baal?," <https://www.theworldmayknow.com/fertility-cults-of-canaan>.

<sup>3</sup>*World*, "By the Numbers," December 7, 2019.

<sup>4</sup>Jeffrey Walton, "Uprooted: Union Seminary Chapel Hosts Plant Confessional," <https://juicy-ecumenism.com/2019/09/18/union-seminary-plant-confession-chapel/>, September 17, 2019.

<sup>5</sup>Allan A. MacRae, *The Gospel of Isaiah* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), p. 46.

<sup>6</sup>Charles Hodge, *I Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965), pp. 193-94).



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**T**he Bill of Rights, the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution, was added as the various independent colonies considered joining the United States in the 1780s. The Patriots were very zealous for their rights and for the need of limited government.

They believed that "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" did NOT come from government, but rather were "unalienable rights" which were conferred by God alone. The role of the State was merely to protect those rights, and to have a military and law enforcement to protect its citizens from evil forces and crime.

Governments throughout history had produced laws and mandates based on the whims of those in control — those with the most power. This often led to shifting standards, with persecution and infringements of rights often the norm. Many times, men were given the sad choice of having to choose between obeying their government or violating their consciences. When they stood on the words of Peter and the other apostles in Acts 5:29, "We ought to obey God rather than men," severe persecution and even death often followed.

Many of the Founders of our country were Christians and the society was overwhelmingly Protestant. The founding principles of our nation were largely patterned after the principles of God's Word.

The **First Amendment** is perhaps the most important, with its guarantees of the free exercise of religion, free



# The **BILL OF RIGHTS** and the **WORD OF GOD**

BY BRAD K. GSELL

speech, free press and freedom of assembly. Some states, such as North Carolina, refused to join the union until these rights were firmly guaranteed.

In notes he took while the Constitution was being written, James Madison wrote: “the civil rights of none shall be abridged on account of religious belief or worship, nor shall any national religion be established, nor shall the full and equal rights of conscience be in any manner, or on any pretext infringed.”

**The Founders proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence that “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” did NOT come from government, but rather were “unalienable rights” which were conferred by God alone.**

The **Second Amendment** guarantees the right to own arms for self defense. “When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace” (Luke 11:21).

“Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked.” (Psalm 82:3-4).

**Amendments Three and Four** guarantee the right for each individual to own and have power over his private property. The Eighth Commandment is “Thou shalt not steal” (Exodus 20:15). The government is to protect its citizens from having

their private property rights trampled by other people — or the government itself!

The **Fifth through the Eighth Amendments** seek to safeguard citizens from being treated immorally or unfairly by the government — particularly its system of justice.

A few of these rights include: trial by jury, no double jeopardy, being afforded witnesses and counsel, having a speedy and public trial, facing ones accuser(s), being presented with the exact charges being pressed, and limits placed on the severity and kinds of punishment allowed.

2 Samuel 23:3 says: “He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.” Also, Micah 6:8: “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”

**Amendments IX and X** were designed to limit government, so men would be free to live their lives according to their own consciences as they sought to fulfill the duties and rights given to each of us by our Creator.

America was established as a “Constitutional Republic,” where personal liberty and the rule of law reign supreme. Even the rule of law had great limits placed upon it. The Tenth Amendment reads: “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.”

Man must be free to serve God. It is a wicked government which in any way interferes with this. Moses told the Israelites: “... what doth the LORD

thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul” (Deuteronomy 10:12).

## Conclusion

Sadly, our society and politicians have largely turned away from God and the principles of His Word. Thus, our precious American liberties are being destroyed as an ever bigger federal government attempts to regulate every aspect of our lives, and to force God’s people to violate their consciences as they seek to obey the Word of God.

Even with good laws, government is only as good as its citizens and the representatives they choose to serve. Let’s be busy about our Father’s business in proclaiming the blessed Gospel of Christ. Only souls redeemed by the blood of Christ can truly be good citizens.

May all believers take heed to that familiar verse, 2 Chronicles 7:14: “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.” •

## REDEEMING THE TIME

Editor: Brad K. Gsell

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## "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY"!

Continued from page 1

Where is the Lord? In Acts 1:11, the angels told the disciples that Christ was "taken up from you into heaven." They continued that "this same Jesus ... shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

Ecclesiastes 12:7 tells us: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

When Stephen was stoned, it says he was "calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59). Christ had already ascended up into heaven, so Stephen was fully anticipating that his soul would be received into heaven to be with his Saviour.

Presbyterian scholar William G.T. Shedd states the Biblical view quite succinctly: "... the intermediate [before Christ's Second Coming] state for the saved is Heaven without the body, and the final state for the saved is Heaven with the body; that the intermediate state for the lost is Hell without the body, and the final state for the lost is Hell with the body."<sup>1</sup>

### Sheol and Hades

Some have taught that the souls of the dead go to a subterranean abode, a sort of holding place, (*sheol* [Old Testament] or *hades* [New Testament]), where they will remain until Christ's Second Coming and the Last Judgment. Some compartmentalize it to include a place of torment and a place of Paradise, which are neither as good or bad as our final abode in either heaven or hell. There is much confusion concerning this, even in some Bible-believing churches.

A variant is that just the Old Testament saints were held in this holding place until the first coming of Christ. However, Francis Turretin, the great theologian of Geneva at the time of the Reformation, points out that:

"Enoch and Elijah were translated to heaven (Hebrews 11:5; 2 Kings 2:11). For although this was peculiar to them that they were bodily whirled into heaven, it was not singular that they were spiritually admitted into it."<sup>2</sup>

Shedd makes a convincing case that "The subdivision of it [*sheol* or *hades*] into heterogeneous compartments, is a conception imported into the Bible from the Greek and Roman classics.... The Biblical Sheol is always an evil, and nothing but an evil."<sup>3</sup>

May we be victorious Christians as we live our lives in anticipation of that great day when we shall be with Christ!

When David writes that "The wicked shall be turned into hell [*sheol*], and all the nations that forget God" (Psalm 9:17), Shedd observes: "If Sheol is merely a promiscuous underworld for all souls, then to be 'turned into *sheol*' is no more a menace for the sinner than for the saint, and consequently a menace for neither."<sup>4</sup>

John Calvin writes: "I know not how it came to pass that any should imagine a subterraneous cavern, to which they have given the name *limbus*.... [It] is nothing but a fable."<sup>5</sup>

One consideration is that the words *sheol* and *hades* are believed by many to refer either to the grave (part of man's punishment for sin), or to hell — "the lake of fire." It is normally clear from the context which meaning is intended. A study of these words is a profitable pursuit.

**Reformation theologians cast off many of the convoluted interpretations which they saw as corruptions**

Shedd further quotes from the *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia*: "The

Protestant churches rejected, with purgatory, the whole idea of a middle state, and taught simply two states and places — heaven for believers, and hell for unbelievers."<sup>6</sup>

This view is reflected in many of the great Reformed creeds of the church.

The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter XXXII, as adopted by the Bible Presbyterian Church in 1938, to conform to the Premillennial convictions of many of its founders, is quite explicit:

"I. The bodies of men, after their death, return to dust, and see corruption; but their souls (which neither die nor sleep), having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them. The souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies; and the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. Besides these two places for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none.

"II. At the return of the Lord Jesus Christ such living persons as are found in him shall not die but be changed: and all the dead shall be raised up with the selfsame bodies, and none other, although with different qualities, which shall be united again to their souls forever.

"III. The bodies of the unjust shall, after Christ has reigned on earth a thousand years, be raised by the power of God to dishonor."

Although there are differences as to the *timing* of these things among good brethren who hold different views of eschatology (study of Last Things), all are agreed as to these events taking place.

In Luke, Christ speaks both of heaven and hell in relationship to particular individuals — before His death and resurrection had taken place. To the thief on the cross, He said, "Ver-

ily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). Since the Scriptures identify heaven with “paradise,” there is no warrant to think that the thief did not go immediately to heaven upon his death. Paul, in 2 Corinthians 12:2-4, speaks of a believer who was “caught up to the third heaven” (the abode of God). Immediately, Paul reiterates, saying that this man was “caught up into paradise.”

Likewise, Christ speaks in Luke 16:23 of the vastly different conditions of the rich man and Lazarus upon their deaths: “And in hell he [the rich man] lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.” Lazarus went immediately to heaven, the abode of Abraham, upon his death. The rich man went to a place “afar off,” where he suffered in eternal torment.

The answer to Westminster Shorter Catechism (WSC) question 19 states: “All mankind by their fall lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever.”

But concerning the saved, WSC question 37 is answered: “The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection.”

Death and life are used respectively throughout Scripture to speak of the abode of the sinner and of the man who has been redeemed by the blood of Christ. Romans 6:23 gives the glorious gospel message: “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

### **What is the resurrection of the body spoken of in Scripture?**

One of the glorious teachings of Scripture is that, at Christ’s Second Coming, the bodies of all believers who have died will come forth from

their graves and will join those who are alive at that time to be with Christ in the air.

Believers throughout history have cherished this Biblical promise. Job, in all his suffering, said: “And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.” Although our bodies decay after death, yet the Bible teaches a literal resurrection of the same body, but with different qualities.

Isaiah 26:19 tells us: “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust...”

Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica: “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead

*“The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection.”*

ANSWER TO  
WESTMINSTER SHORTER  
CATECHISM QUESTION 37

in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

Paul tells Titus that all Christians should live a sober, godly life on this earth and should always be “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

We are sometimes guilty of thinking only of our souls being eternally

in either heaven or hell. Yet we miss much blessing if we fail to place importance on the resurrection of our bodies.

### **Christ’s resurrection was representative of the coming resurrection of believers**

1 Corinthians 15 is one of the clearest and most detailed passages in Scripture concerning the nature of our resurrected bodies.

Paul begins his discussion of this subject by stating the absolute necessity of the bodily resurrection of Christ: “Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen. And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain” (1 Corinthians 15:12-14).

Paul then ties the resurrection of believers to the resurrection of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 15:20, Paul writes: “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.”

In verse 23, he states: “But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.”

In Romans 8:11, Paul writes: “But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken [make alive] your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”

Paul likewise wrote to the Thessalonians: “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him” (1 Thessalonians 4:14). This verse shows what we see in the answer to WSC Question 37: “...and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection.”

*Continued on page 12*

## "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY"!

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In Revelation 1:5, the Apostle John refers to Christ as the "first begotten of the dead."

Charles Hodge writes concerning this: "Christ has not only risen, but he has risen in a representative char-

*"But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."*

HEBREWS 11:16

acter. His resurrection is the pledge of the resurrection of his people."<sup>7</sup>

This precious promise is discussed by Scottish secessionist James Fisher. In writing about WSC Question 37, he wrote: "Because, as at the death of Christ, though his soul was separated from his body, yet neither the one nor the other were separated from his divine person, but remained as firmly united to it as ever; so neither the soul nor body of the believer shall be separated from Christ by their separation from one another at death, but both of them remain indissolubly united to him for ever (Romans 8:38,39)."

He explained further: "The union [with Christ] was with the person of believers, of which their bodies are a part; and this union being indissoluble, it must still subsist with their bodies in the grave, as well as with their souls in heaven (Isaiah 26:19)."

### What will be the nature of the resurrected bodies of the dead?

Many have overreached in their conjectures as to the exact details of

our resurrected bodies. Sometimes the most Biblical position is to recognize the limits of what God has chosen to reveal, and then to go no further.

Charles Hodge wisely warns: "It is very foolish ... to attempt to determine from our present bodies what is to be the nature of our bodies hereafter."<sup>8</sup>

However, Hodge also warns against spiritualizing or allegorizing the resurrection of the dead. He states: "... it is the resurrection of the bodies of the dead, and not merely the continued existence of their souls, which is affirmed."<sup>9</sup>

We do, however, know many of the attributes of the resurrected bodies of the saints:

1. They will be according to God's design. "But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body" (1 Corinthians 15:38).
2. They will have attributes designed for eternity in heaven, and not as they were on the earth. "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (1 Corinthians 15:50).
3. Whereas our earthly bodies are "corruptible," our heavenly bodies will be "incorruptible" (1 Corinthians 15:42).
4. Whereas our earthly bodies are "dishonorable," our heavenly bodies will be "glorious" (1 Corinthians 15:43).
5. Whereas our earthly bodies are "weak," our heavenly bodies will be "powerful" (1 Corinthians 15:43).
6. Whereas our earthly bodies are "natural," our heavenly bodies will be "spiritual" (1 Corinthians 15:44).
7. Whereas as our natural bodies are mortal, our heavenly bodies will live forever (1 Corinthians 15:54).
8. We will retain our identities and be recognizable. "And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Ja-

cob, in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 8:11).

9. Our bodies will be literally resurrected. They will be glorified bodies, not new bodies. Christ tells us in John 5:28-29: "... for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."
10. Both the dead and the living will "be changed." "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).
11. Our resurrected bodies will be "fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Philippians 3:21). 1 John 3:2 says that "when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

*"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his."*

HEBREWS 4:9-10

Unlike the just, the bodies of the wicked shall be raised in dishonor, to face the final judgment of being consigned for all eternity to hell.

### "Fulness of joy," the hope of the believer!

The great hope and joy of God's children, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, has always been to be in

heaven for all eternity with our glorious Saviour, Jesus Christ.

The Psalmist wrote: “Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (Psalm 16:11).

In every case, the Bible presents us on this earth as “strangers and pilgrims” heading for “a better country” (Hebrews 11:13; 1 Peter 2:11).

Paul told the Philippians: “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). Paul desired his heavenly home — “to be with Christ; which is far better” (verse 23).

But, more importantly, his satisfaction was being in the will of God, whether on this earth or in heaven. In verses 23 and 24, he says he is torn between earth and heaven, but with joy he remains on earth, because he knows God has a work for him to do.

This is the state of every child of God. The Faith Chapter, Hebrews 11, tells us of Abraham: “For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:10).

Then, in verse 16 of this chapter, we are told of all the great heroes of the faith: “But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.”

Paul echoes this in 2 Corinthians 5:1: “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

### Eternal Rest

The soul of every child of God goes to Glory immediately upon his death. The writer of Hebrews tells us: “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his” (Hebrews 4:9-10).

As the Fourth Commandment tells us, our earthly sabbath is patterned after God’s day of rest following Creation. And, it also represents our eternal Sabbath in heaven!

“So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

1 CORINTHIANS 15:54-57

### “The Blessed Hope”

Knowing that our saved loved ones are in heaven, and that all the bodies of the saints will come forth from their graves at Christ’s Second Coming is of overwhelming comfort to all believers. Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 4:13: “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.”

Beloved, we have this HOPE! We certainly grieve when a loved one goes to glory, but covering it all is this precious promise of God!

As he concludes 1 Corinthians 15, verses 54-57, Paul pronounces: “So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be

brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

May we be victorious Christians as we live our lives in anticipation of that great day when we shall be with Christ! After these glorious verses, Paul concludes in the final verse of the chapter, verse 58: “Therefore [because of the glorious promises concerning which I have just written to you], my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” As hymnwriter James Black wrote: “Let us labor for the Master from the dawn till setting sun.... When the roll is called up yonder, I’ll be there.” •

<sup>1</sup>William G.T. Shedd, *The Doctrine of Endless Punishment* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1886), pp. 59-60. Quotation from article on Hades in *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia*.

<sup>2</sup>Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James T. Dennison Jr., trans. George Musgrave Giger, vol. 2 (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1992-1997), pp. 257-261.

<sup>3</sup>Shedd, p. 24.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. I (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Reprinted 1975), p. 442.

<sup>6</sup>Shedd, p. 20.

<sup>7</sup>Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, reprinted 1983) p. 323.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 345.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 321.

<sup>10</sup>James Fisher, *The Westminster Assembly’s Shorter Catechism Explained, by Way of Question and Answer* (Towar, J. & D.M. Hogan, 1831), p. 177.



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## WHAT'S WRONG WITH EQUALITY

Continued from page 1

ilar will be brought back up in the near future.

### The Equality Act endangers religious liberty for Christian business owners

President Joe Biden declared on his website (joebiden.com) that the passage of this Equality Act was one of his top priorities in his first 100 days in office. One page on his site, with the heading “The Biden Plan to Advance LGBTQ+ Equality in America and Around the World,” lays out his lengthy agenda concerning this matter. In the upper left corner of the page is a logo which reads: “Battle for the Soul of Our Nation.” And, indeed it is!

Biden made clear that he wanted to do away with many of the religious exemptions in place, coupled with an attack on the Trump Administration’s protection of religious liberty.

One point in his agenda declares: “End the misuse of broad exemptions to discriminate. Religious freedom is a fundamental American value. But states have inappropriately used broad exemptions to allow businesses, medical providers, social service agencies, state and local government officials, and others to discriminate against LGBTQ+ people. The Trump-Pence Administration has deliberately and systematically attempted to gut protections for the LGBTQ+ community by carving out broad religious exemptions to existing nondiscrimination laws and policies across federal agencies. Biden will reverse Trump’s policies misusing these broad exemptions and fight so that no one is turned away from a business or refused service by a government official just because of who they are or who they love.”

The protections of the past Administration were designed not to harm any citizens, or to keep a busi-

ness from having to sell a head of cabbage to someone at the grocery store.

Rather, they were designed to protect the First Amendment — so religious business owners would not be forced to violate their consciences in using their creative talents to provide cakes, flowers, photography, music, and so forth, for events that are condemned by Scripture. Also, a clear reading of the First Amendment would prohibit someone from having to create textual messages, photos, and art on such items as t-shirts, ball caps and cakes, which violate that person’s conscience.

**The day may not be far off when we will have ministers locked up for quoting Colossians 3:5: “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”**

The Biden Administration clearly would like to see such Christian businessmen and -women destroyed, and its secular agenda forced upon good and godly citizens.

### The Equality Act widens the scope of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in a way that clearly will endanger churches and Christian organizations

Historically, churches, Christian schools and other religious charities have often been given exemptions on religious liberty grounds when certain legislation is considered. In contrast, the 2021 Equality Act contains a paragraph on “Public Accommodations.” If adopted, the Act would widen the venues which would be covered by the law. These include any: “place of or establishment that pro-

vides exhibition, entertainment, recreation, exercise, amusement, public gathering, or public display.”

Since worship services and prayer meetings are considered “public gathering[s],” churches are in danger as never before. Christian colleges, schools, mission boards, and charities of various kinds will undoubtedly face even greater danger.

### The Equality Act would trump the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993

In addition to these things, the Act declares: “The Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 (42 U.S.C. 2000bb *et seq.*) shall not provide a claim concerning, or a defense to a claim under, a covered title, or provide a basis for challenging the application or enforcement of a covered title.”

Concerning this, Danielle Kurtzleben, on the National Public Radio website (2/24/21) writes: “Importantly, the bill also explicitly says that it trumps the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (commonly known by its acronym RFRA). The law, passed in 1993, set a higher bar for the government to defend laws if people argued those laws infringed upon religious freedom.”

### The Equality Act would amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to alter the original meaning of the word “sex”

The bill was introduced in order to amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It seeks to redefine the word “sex” (from the original intent of merely meaning male and female), by the addition of the following words: “including sexual orientation and gender identity.” Merely listing these additional things may not seem like a problem. However, it is the vast ramifications which attach to this. The radical left is not satisfied to allow people to think differently concerning their troublesome orthodoxy. They want to FORCE U.S. citizens to ac-

cept and practice their beliefs, or suffer loss of jobs, court cases, steep fines, and so forth. Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) stated to CNN that Americans should “not even just respect but take pride, take pride in our LGBTQ community.”

With the erosion of religious exemptions, and the widening of the venues where these new laws would apply, the principles of Biblical morality that all true churches and Christian schools insist on may very possibly place them on the wrong side of the law, with government harassment and fines to follow. If enforced, the law would require men to be allowed in women’s bathrooms, men to participate in women’s sports, the acceptance of sex change surgeries, the acceptance of homosexuality, etc., in the church and in the world at large.

### **The Equality Act opposes Biblical marriage as merely a “sex stereotype”**

The Act condemns what it calls “the sex stereotype that marriage should only be between heterosexual couples.” Many Christian and Jewish groups point out that this would codify official opposition to the teaching of the Scriptures by the U.S. Government.

The Coalition for Jewish Values (CJV), an organization which includes 1,500 rabbis, wrote to House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy: “The Equality Act expressly declares that the Book of Genesis [see 2:24] and all of the Jewish laws pertaining to marriage as a sanctified union between man and woman (called ‘kiddushin’ in Hebrew, from the word ‘kadosh,’ Holy) are nothing more than engagement in discriminatory stereotypes.”

### **The Act would infringe on a minister or Christian counselor’s right to counsel those who come to them seeking help.**

Many ministers have counseled young people about sexual sin, and

God’s design for sex only within the confines of marriage between one man and one woman. This includes showing them from the Bible, even from the words of Jesus Christ, that God condemns fornication, adultery, “youthful lusts,” homosexuality, and so forth.

The Equality Act contains a section which would federally criminalize what it calls “conversion therapy.” If passed, it would be a federal crime to counsel anyone to abstain from these evils and follow a life according to God’s design. The weight of the U.S. Government would be for us to be forced to CONDONE what the Bible declares to be sin!

The day may not be far off when we will have ministers locked up for quoting Colossians 3:5: “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”

### **Thankfully, a number of congressmen have spoken eloquently against this**

A number of congressmen have issued poignant statements decrying this so-called Equality Act. We are thankful for their discernment. A couple of quotes from these statements will suffice.

Rep. Andy Biggs (R-AZ) issued the following statement: “The Equality Act endangers the safety and well-being of our families. Restaurants, gyms, and schools will be required to allow men to enter women’s restrooms, and women will be incapable of reaching their highest potential in sports if they are forced to compete against men. Health care providers may be forced to offer abortion procedures, and health insurance plans may have to cover elective abortions. Religious freedom, freedom of expression, and freedom of association guaranteed by the First Amendment of the Constitution are also under assault with this radical legislation. An individual’s religious views will be abated,

and the Left will force all Americans to conform to their ideology.

“H.R. 5 is the most recent example of Democrats’ efforts to control every aspect of American lives. Centralizing power in the federal government will allow Democrats to incriminate those who oppose their radical agenda. I unequivocally oppose this bill and will continue to fight against the tyrannical views of the Left.”

Rep. Mike Johnson (R-LA) stated: “This bill would eviscerate constitutionally protected rights by empowering the federal government to force employers, medical professionals, parents, business owners, and all Americans to act in violation of their conscience.... The federal government should not be able to dictate a belief system.” Rep. Johnson said further: “This is unprecedented. It’s dangerous. It’s an attack on our first freedom, the first freedom listed in the Bill of Rights, religious liberty.”

### **“We ought to obey God ...”**

The Bible clearly tells us that we are to obey the authorities that God has seen fit to be in power at any given time. However, this in no way allows the government to force men to violate the Word of God.

In Acts 5:29, when Peter and the other apostles were reprimanded by the authorities for continuing to teach and preach about Christ, they replied: “We ought to obey God rather than men.”

The time is fast approaching when true Christians may be forced to disobey men, in order to be faithful to God — and suffer the consequences. Psalm 94 is a prayer to God. In verse 16, it says: “Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?”

In verses 21 and 22, the psalmist petitions the Lord: “They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood. But the Lord is my defence; and my God is the rock of my refuge.” •

# "Who Will Tell Them of Jesus' Love?"

The last words of Jesus Christ, before ascending up into heaven, are recorded in Acts 1:8: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Verse 9 tells us: "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight."

All four of the Gospels record this missionary imperative, or Great Commission. When studying Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 16:15-16, Luke 24:46-49, and John 20:21-22, together with Acts 1:8, we see a number of wonderful aspects of Christ's command to us.

## Christians are personally sent by Christ

In John 20:21-22, Jesus said to the disciples: "Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." And, he commands the disciples in Acts 1:8: "ye shall be witnesses unto me...."

## Christ commands all Christians to be missionaries

In Acts 1:8 we are told that missionary work begins in "Jerusalem." Luke 24:47 likewise says that the Gospel of Christ "should be preached ... beginning at Jerusalem." In other words, God has called all Christians to be missionaries right where we are!

## The missionary imperative is universal

Christ made clear that His Gospel was not just meant for the Jews, or in certain geographic bounds. Christ tells us in Matthew that we are to go

to "all nations." In Mark He says "into all the world." In Luke, He says "all nations." And, in Acts, He says "to the uttermost part of the earth."

In Revelation 7:9-10, we see the saints in heaven: "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

## Missionary work can only be done by the power of the Holy Ghost

Christ tells us in Luke 24:49: "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." In John 20:22, Christ says: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." And, He says in Acts 1:8: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you."

In Acts 2, we see the coming of the Holy Spirit upon them at Pentecost. Peter quotes from Joel the promise of the outpouring of God's Spirit. Joel 2:28 says that God will "pour out my spirit upon all flesh...." This is the "promise of God," that he will give us His Spirit.

We must never forget that "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it ..." (Psalm 127:1). Our witness for the Lord Jesus Christ is "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6).

## Christ commands us to "preach the gospel" of redemption

The missionary does not go to preach a gospel of good works. He does not go merely to educate, to phys-

ically improve lives, or to offer aid and comfort — as important as those things are. Mark 16:15 says that we are to "preach the gospel." Luke 24:47 tells us: "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name...." The true gospel of confronting men with their sin, and the work of God's Spirit in bringing conviction of sin and repentance, is clearly the message of the missionary. Sadly false substitutes are often seen in so-called "missionary work" today.

## Christ commands us to lead men to be Christ's disciples

Matthew 28:19-20 tells us to: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

We are not just to go and seek to gain great numbers of "converts." Christ and the Apostles present a full-orbed message. Once someone has come to trust in Christ as Saviour, they must be taught the Word of God: "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commnded you...." "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:14-16).

## Christ promises to be with us

The Christian, empowered by the "promise of God," and "power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you," is futher told by Christ: "and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." •

—Brad K. Gsell