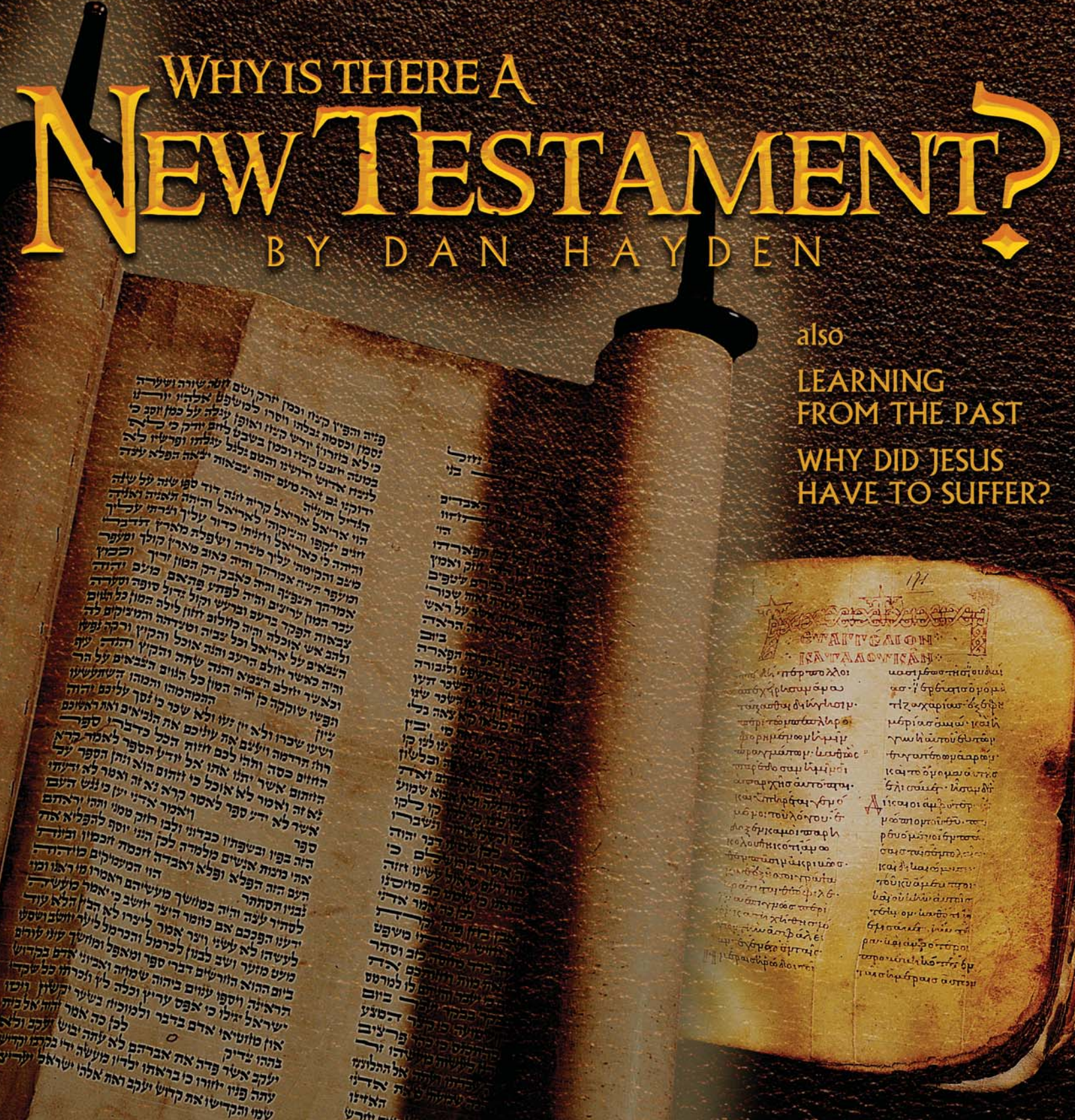


# SOLA SCRIPTURA

AFFIRMING THE AUTHENTICITY, ACCURACY, AND AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

## WHY IS THERE A New Testament? BY DAN HAYDEN

also  
LEARNING  
FROM THE PAST  
WHY DID JESUS  
HAVE TO SUFFER?



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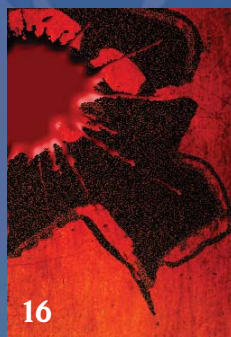
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SOLA SCRIPTURA

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"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness..." (2 Timothy 3:16)

"In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following." (1 Timothy 4:6)

"Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 3)

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## The Victorious Life

Scott Pierre, Executive Director



**H**ave you ever seen an athletic event where there wasn't a winner? Me neither. It defeats the purpose, doesn't it? Why compete if not to win? In fact, the goal of any athlete or team is to finish a season successfully. But the *ultimate* goal is to finish **undefeated**. No losses, only wins. This is a remarkable accomplishment in the life of any athlete or athletic team. All through my childhood, I was on dozens of football, baseball, and wrestling teams and I can only boast of a handful of undefeated seasons. Although the athlete strives for only wins, all it takes is one loss to mar the record.

Many people look at their lives the same way. We desire to live strong, undefeated lives, but this is simply impossible due to the fact that our sin nature is quick to entangle us and trip us up. Sometimes our defeat comes after a long drawn out fight that weakens and tires us into giving in, and other times we easily turn ourselves over to temptation. The beauty of the grace of God is that with repentance comes forgiveness, and with forgiveness we are granted a clean slate and a new season with no numbers in the loss column. To know that we have been granted forgiveness gives us the will to face the next wave of battles that lie ahead. But there is great danger of taking forgiveness for granted. I've known athletes and teams who, while enjoying the glories of an undefeated season, became complacent, let their guard down, and were then overpowered by their opponent. In the same way, the Believer can abuse God's amazing gift of grace. We may think, "Since God will forgive me, then I'm free to do what pleases me now and afterward seek God's forgiveness." **WRONG!** We are called to be a people who die to sin and become alive to righteousness. Paul warns against such an attitude in Romans 6:1-2, "What shall we say

then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? **MAY IT NEVER BE!**"

The problem is that we are all sinners and fall short of God's glory on a frequent basis. And in addition, we know that certain sins carry much greater earthly consequences, especially if they are continually practiced. Allow me the liberty to use an illustration. Life is sort of like a chalkboard. We start the day out and our board (life) is freshly cleaned and black. Each time we make a mark on it (sin) and then erase the mark (forgiveness through repentance) something happens. The crisp blackness of the clean chalkboard changes to

**"We must be disciplined and focused if we hope to finish victoriously."**



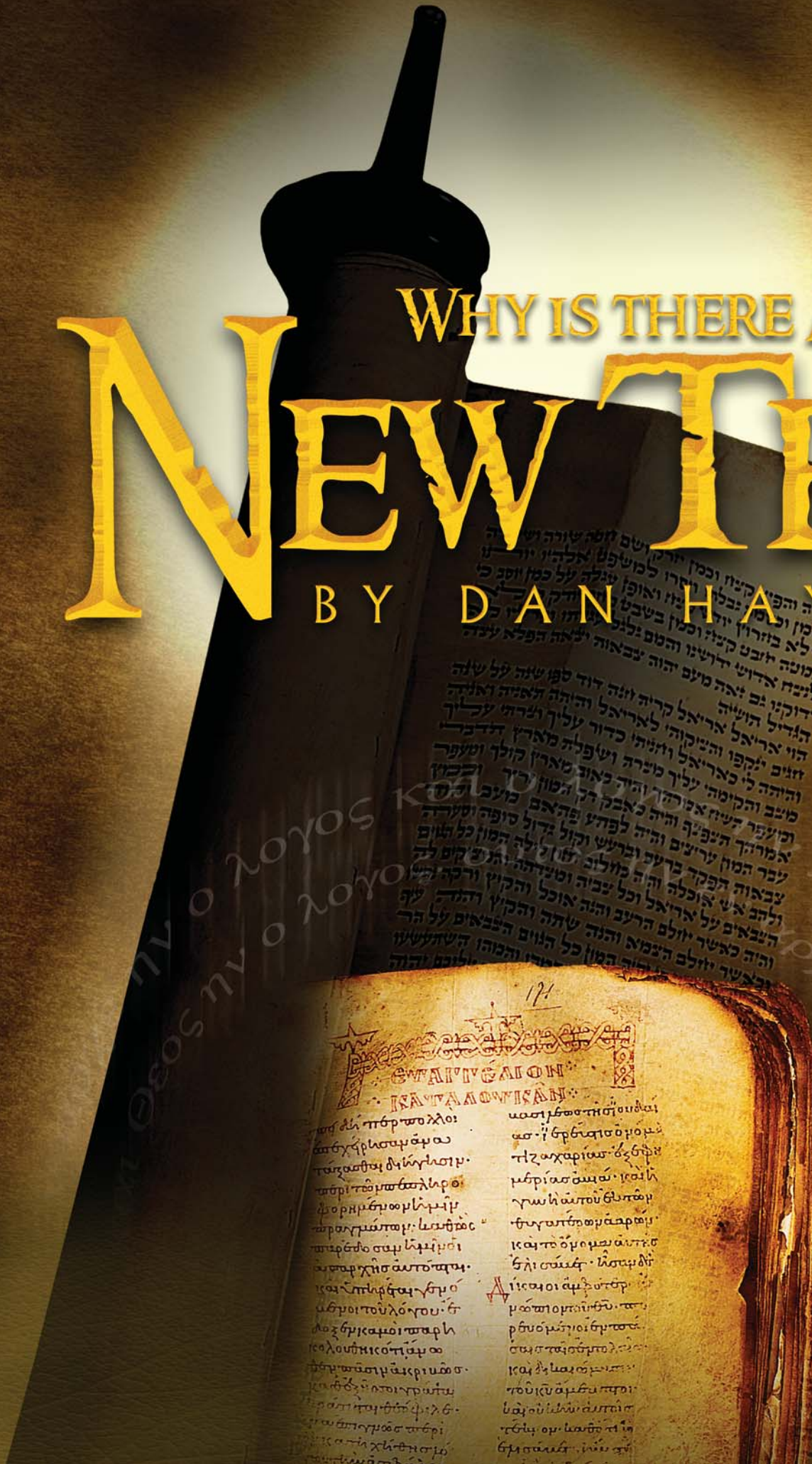
a cloudy gray because of the chalk dust. Please note that in this example the gray residue does not represent our forgiven state before God but rather the scars and ongoing earthly consequences that often exist because of sin... even forgiven sin. Examples of this are seen in our world every day: the unwed pregnant mother who, although forgiven by God, is still very much pregnant and will indeed give birth and bear the effects of her choices; the spouse who has been unfaithful, although forgiven by God, has destroyed the trust his/her marriage relationship is based on; the thief who, although forgiven by God, must pay for his crime by spending time in jail. Now don't misunderstand me as saying that God's forgiveness carries a grudge. It doesn't. God can and will completely forgive in each of these examples, but these and other sins can and do carry long-term earthly consequences and hinder ones ability to be the ambassadors that Christ has called his followers to be.

Therefore, let us take notice and examine our own hearts and mind. Then let us be a people who seek to be holy as He is holy. In doing so, let us press on to maturity in Christ by saying "NO" to sin. Consider forgiveness as the ultimate teammate, the ringer if you will, sitting on the bench and suited up, always ready to come into the game if we stumble. The season is before us, and we must be disciplined and focused if we hope to finish victoriously.

In this issue we offer a kind of Spiritual Gatorade for you—to nourish your Spirit as you press on. Dan Hayden's cover article gives you insight on the New Testament as a completion of the words and message presented in the Old Testament. Herb Samworth presents a lesson on the issue of "tradition" within the church, and James MacDonald offers new insight into suffering of Christ. It is my prayer that this issue will refresh your spirit and will encourage your heart. ■

# WHY IS THERE A NEW TEST

BY DAN HAYDEN



# AMENT?

**T**he words “New Testament” are an offense to Jews who are serious about their faith. Not only do the Jews reject the idea that the Christian New Testament is Scripture, they also dislike the fact that we as Christians refer to their holy writings as “old”—the Old Testament.

As publicity circulated during the opening of The Scriptorium: Center for Biblical Antiquities here in Orlando (August 2002), there were a few Jewish rabbis who voiced opposition to what we were doing. They argued that ancient copies of the Jewish manuscripts should not be put on display in a public setting, but should be reserved for private veneration in Jewish synagogues. Those few voices of dissent were given national notoriety, leaving the impression that the whole Jewish community was upset with us.

This was not the case, however. We demonstrated sensitivity to the rabbis’ feelings and assured them that every precaution would be taken not to violate their sense of propriety. In the end, the rabbis actually expressed satisfaction with the Scriptorium project, and today we enjoy a good relationship with the Jewish community of Orlando. In fact, we undoubtedly owe a debt of gratitude to the rabbis for the national publicity that actually worked in our favor.

In the midst of that heated reaction, however, it became apparent that the rabbis had no quarrel with the idea of exposing the ancient treasures of the Christian New Testament. In their view the New Testament was not Scripture and in no way compared with the sacred writings of the Jewish tradition. They

were encouraged to realize that we revered their Scriptures and were treating the Hebrew manuscripts in our possession with the utmost respect. Yet they never expressed any concern over what we were doing with the manuscripts of the Christian faith. By their thinking, nothing blasphemous could be done with them because they were not the Word of the Living God.

Also interesting is the fact that the rabbis never referred to the writings of Moses and the Prophets as the “Old Testament.” Their sacred writings were simply “the Scriptures.” You see, if there is no “New Testament” Scripture, then how could the Jewish writings be called the “Old” Testament?


So why *is* there a New Testament? And on what basis should the New Testament be accepted as Holy Scripture alongside the Jewish Scriptures?

## THERE REALLY IS SOMETHING NEW

First, we need to understand what is meant by “New Testament.” The word “testament” comes from the Latin word *testamentum*, which refers to a covenant or official agreement. Even today we refer to people’s dying wishes as their “last will and testament” (an official document expressing their final desires). So “New Testament” simply means “new covenant.”

The Jewish Scriptures contain two futuristic ideas that are very important to the Jewish faith. One is that a Messiah will come to make right what is wrong in the world. The second is that His redemption and kingdom will come about as the result of a New Covenant. This covenant is a solemn promise

TESTAMENTUM



of God recorded by the prophet Jeremiah (Jer 31:31-34).

The official view of the Jewish community is that the New Covenant is still future, awaiting the coming of the Messiah. Nevertheless, there were Jews in Jerusalem in the first century AD who believed that Jesus was that Messiah and that His teachings were the fulfillment of the New Covenant. Therefore, when the disciples of Jesus wrote of the life and teachings of Jesus, those writings were considered to be the ultimate fulfillment of Holy Scripture. What was incomplete in the writings of the Law and the Prophets (the Jewish Scriptures) was now made complete by the writings of the apostles of Jesus (the New Testament). The former writings, therefore, were simply referred to as the “Old Testament.”

At this point it might be helpful to understand how the Hebrew Scriptures were initially viewed by the Jewish religious authorities. There was a twofold division in the collection process. First, there were the books of the Law—the five books of Moses. Then there were the additional books of the Prophets—a group of seventeen (later thirty-four, as we have them in our contemporary Bibles). Although these books were subsequently divided into three categories (the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings), the most common designation of the Jewish Scriptures was simply the Law and the Prophets: “So far as canonization is concerned, there were only two groups of books: the Law (five books) and the Prophets (seventeen books).”<sup>1</sup>

As we read the Old Testament, it becomes obvious that the Jewish Scriptures anticipate a final conclusion that had not

been realized in the days of the prophets. The last chapter of the last book reveals an expectation of more to come. There the Messiah is called *the sun of righteousness*, and it says that He will *rise with healing in His wings* (Mal 4:1-2). The prophet Malachi was saying that the Messianic King would one day come and set things right in the world. The point is that when the Old Testament ends, the story is not done; there is still more to come. In other words, the Jewish Scriptures (the Law and the Prophets) are incomplete by themselves. They anticipate a climactic conclusion.

Let me illustrate this from J.R.R. Tolkien’s popular trilogy *The Lord of the Rings*. The first book, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, sets the stage for the story when a fellowship of unlikely companions is given the responsibility of protecting a ring until it arrives at its final destination. In the second book, *The Two Towers*, the fellowship is split, and each of the groups experiences harrowing events and great struggles. As this book comes to its conclusion, the reader is left on the brink of expectation and wonder. The story is obviously not concluded, and the reader desperately wants to read the final installment. In the third book, *The Return of the King*, the story comes to a climactic conclusion—the evil realm is destroyed and the righteous king is enthroned. It is a happy ending, and the reader is finally satisfied.

Now although the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy has many similarities to the Bible story, Tolkien has made it clear that the similarities are purely coincidental. In his forward to the popular trilogy, he says, “As for any inner meaning or ‘message,’ it has in the intention of the author none. It is

“THE COMING OF JESUS  
OF THE KING—AND”

neither allegorical nor topical.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, as an illustration of how the Bible was constructed, Tolkien's trilogy is an interesting comparison. It took fourteen years (from 1936 to 1949) for Tolkien to write the three parts of the story, in the same way it took many years for each segment of the Bible to come together. There are three major divisions in the Tolkien tale—as there are three major parts to the biblical record (the Law, the Prophets, and the New Testament). The first two books in Tolkien's trilogy laid the foundation for the final conclusion—much like the Law and the Prophets set the stage for the final episode described in the New Testament. Finally, as the concluding book, *The Return of the King*, fulfilled the expectation of Tolkien's trilogy, so the third part of the Bible, the New Testament, presents the Messianic King and His victory over evil as the climactic conclusion of Holy Scripture.

The validity of the New Testament as Holy Scripture rises or falls with this question: *Is Jesus the anticipated Messiah of the Jewish Scriptures?* The New Testament cannot be God's Word unless it is the exact fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. The coming of Jesus has to be volume three—*The Return of the King*—and that is exactly what it claims to be.

The problem with the Jewish authorities of the first century AD was that they wanted to jump ahead to the kingdom aspect of the Messiah's mission, where He would come with great power to overthrow the Roman occupation of Israel. They failed, however, to comprehend the first part of His mission to redeem mankind and simply chose to ignore that part of their Scriptures. The fact of the matter is, though, that Jesus

did exactly what the Law and the Prophets said the Messiah would do. Jesus' triumph over evil began with His blood sacrifice for our sins and will culminate with His victorious return. The New Testament is indeed the fulfillment of the Old Testament story.

Thus, like Tolkien's trilogy, the Bible was constructed in three major parts with each part adding to the next in a continuous story of the triumph of good over evil. The Law and the Prophets are wonderful parts of the story of God's Word, but they desperately need a part three to complete them. The New Testament is that third part, without which the story is unresolved. That's why there is a New Testament.

### WHO WROTE THE NEW TESTAMENT?

It might surprise you to know that, with the exception of Luke, it was Jews who wrote the New Testament. The final installment of Holy Scripture was written in the same way that the Law and the Prophets were written—by Jews who were committed to the Jewish Scriptures. These men also claimed to be prophets of God, like their Old Testament counterparts, and their authority lay in the fact that they were directly commissioned by Jesus Christ for their task. The Christian message was said to have been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief cornerstone (Eph 2:20).

Thus the New Testament was not the product of a Gentile reaction against the Jewish faith, but rather, a legitimate Jewish expansion of what the Jewish Scriptures taught. It is not something foreign and incongruous with the sacred books of the Jews. There is an intimate tie between the

Scriptures of the New Covenant and the Scriptures of the Old Covenant, with literally hundreds of quotes and allusions from the Law and the Prophets in the New Testament. The New Testament simply claims to be the fulfillment of all that the Old Testament anticipated. There is a thread of completion running through the entirety of the Bible, and it is all Jewish in nature and scope. It is truly one book and one story in three parts—the Law, the Prophets, and the New Testament.

The New Testament is a fitting conclusion to the Old Testament Scriptures by virtue of the fact that it completes the story and is the product of Jewish writers who were fully convinced that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament record. The New Testament is not a Gentile religious writing foisted upon the Jewish Scriptures. It is entirely Jewish in its nature and background. The early Christian Church was totally Jewish and was centered in Jerusalem for the first ten years of its existence. Only later, through the efforts of the apostle Paul (remember that he was formerly a Jewish rabbi), did the message of Christ spread to the rest of the world to include Gentile believers. The argument of Paul and the disciples of Jesus has always been that Jesus Christ is the Messiah and Savior of mankind promised in the Old Testament—and that the New Testament is, therefore, the capstone of Holy Scripture. ■

### ENDNOTES

1. Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), p. 155.
2. J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1965), p. x.

JESUS HAS TO BE VOLUME THREE—THE RETURN  
THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT IT CLAIMS TO BE.”



# LEARN FROM THE PAST

## IS “TRADITION” A BAD WORD?

BY HERB SAMWORTH

**We all have trigger words that evoke a negative response,** words that when mentioned can conjure up feelings of anger and resentment, or even of fear and humiliation. Trigger words are emotional words, and the response to them is usually visceral rather than thoughtful. In Evangelical circles, “tradition” is one of those words.

Say “tradition” to Protestants, and their minds will flood with foreboding thoughts: superstition flowing out of the Dark Ages and a veneration of the fanciful ideas of humans superimposed over the Word of God. They prepare for argument, not discussion, because they have already concluded that nothing good can come of tradition.

# THE

## PROTESTANTS... AND THEY TO ARGUMENT, NOT DISCUSSION

### SAY "TRADITION" TO PREPARE FOR

Yet "tradition" is a good word if understood correctly, and for many of us, it needs to be rescued from the chasm of emotional bondage. Perhaps if we substituted words like "legacy" or "heritage" for "tradition," there might be a more sober reflection on the idea of learning from the past. The thought of leaving a spiritual heritage to future generations will please even the staunchest protester. After all, formal confessions of faith have dotted the Evangelical landscape for centuries, setting the tone for faith and worship in scores of Protestant congregations. We all have our time-honored and revered traditions. Tradition isn't the problem, for the Bible often speaks in good terms about tradition. It is quite clearly the misuse of tradition that has produced this chronic indigestion among Protestants, causing them to respond with a gag reflex.

In the New Testament the word "tradition" is used in two different ways. First, it is used to describe what is handed down from one generation to another. The verbal form actually means "to deliver up," conveying the idea of something being handed over to someone else. The second use of the word is limited to the content of what is delivered up. Here the content can be either good or bad depending on the nature of what is being transferred. So the concept of tradition is truly innocuous. The primary use of the word emphasizes the act itself, while the secondary use concentrates on the content. In both cases then, it is simply that something is passed on to another generation.

A New Testament example of a bad tradition occurs in Mark 7:11 when the Lord condemned the Pharisees who, by their tradition of *corban* (or "dedicated to God"), nullified the Fifth Commandment. This commandment of the Law required a man to honor his father and mother by supplying their physical needs. The Pharisees failed to do this and excused their actions by claiming that all their material resources had been dedicated to God.

An example of a good tradition, on the other hand, is found in 2 Thessalonians 2:15, where the apostle Paul admonished the

Thessalonians to hold to the traditions which they had been taught. Therefore, it is the context of the passage that determines whether what is handed down is good or bad.

Although we may desire to have nothing to do with tradition, that is an impossibility. To escape the influence of tradition would require us to leave the world. Tradition has benefited the Church of Jesus Christ over the centuries through the handing down of hymns, confessions of faith, liturgies, etc., from previous generations. This is part of the heritage of being a Christian. We are not required to start from the beginning to learn and define our faith. Former generations can be our benefactors and teachers, enabling us to apprehend the things of God. However, the situation is entirely different if what is handed down fails to elucidate the Scriptures but rather distorts its message.

It is in this latter sense that Protestants have reacted against the concept of tradition. Content, not the process, has been the concern. Protestants have correctly understood that for some, tradition refers to teaching that adds to the Word of God. Usually this type of teaching is an appeal not to what was written but to what was transmitted orally. An example of unwritten tradition is the teaching that the Lord is said to have given His disciples during the forty days after His resurrection. Apart from a few comments in Acts 1, the Bible says nothing about what He taught during this time, but scholars suggest that oral sources have supplied the content of His teaching. So tradition in this sense becomes an additional form of revelation that supplements the written Word of God. This results in a two-source basis of authority: the Scriptures and the oral tradition. The Church of Rome has embraced this concept of tradition over the years.

However, since the time of Vatican II, from 1960 to 1963, a new understanding of the word has emerged. "Tradition" is now determined by the *Magisterium*, the teaching office of the Church. Even though a doctrine such as the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven may never have been taught in history, the *Magisterium's* declaration of it as tradition gives it the status of a doctrine that has been taught and believed by the Church for centuries. According to this understanding, the teachings of the *Magisterium* displace the written Scriptures as the supreme authority in the Church of Rome, an act that increased Protestants' propensity to view tradition as something that hinders or distorts the correct interpretation of Scripture. Rather than aiding in the understanding of Scripture, tradition is seen as an obstacle that embellishes the text with supplemental ideas that contradict and confuse the clear teaching of the Bible.

Even though the term *Magisterium* is a recent label, the idea of including extrabiblical information as equally valid revelation from God goes back to the beginning of the Dark Ages. To counteract this view of tradition, the Reformers taught the doctrine of the perspicuity of the Scriptures, the belief that the meaning of Scripture was self-evident or clear in its basic teaching. The perspicuity of Scripture is expressed by the statement "Scripture is its own interpreter." The Reformers also taught the doctrine of *sola scriptura*, or "Scripture alone." *Sola scriptura* is the belief that the canonical

# LEARNING FROM THE PAST, EVANGELICALS NOVELTY OF INTERPRETATION

WITHOUT THE BALLAST OF  
ARE SUBJECT TO EVERY

Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the final authority in all matters of belief and practice. The Scriptures hold this position because they are inspired, or God-breathed. When Scripture speaks, God speaks. As a result, there can be no appeal beyond the Scripture to a higher authority, because there can be no higher authority in the Christian life than the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures. Tradition in all of its forms, however, does not qualify as inspired Scripture. Therefore it cannot be considered as our final authority.

Yet there is an aspect of tradition beyond the Church's acceptance of extrabiblical information as authoritative that we need to take more seriously as we answer the question "How does the authority of Scripture function on a practical level?" Here we must make a distinction between what the Scriptures *are* (the inspired Word of God) and how they are applied to the Christian life (practical application based on interpretation). You see, in order for a person to effectively apply the teaching of the Bible to life, he or she must understand what it says. And to know what it says, the person must engage in interpretation.

Interpretation is the process of determining the author's intended meaning through careful observation of the text and comparison of Scripture with Scripture. This is a precise process, but often not an easy one. So it is here that the tradition of the early Church Fathers can play a helpful role.

Through the centuries the Church has bequeathed to succeeding generations its understanding of what the Scriptures teach. This interpretation of Scripture is expressed in the writings of early Church leaders as well as in the pronouncements of Church coun-

cils, and in such things as confessions of faith, liturgies, hymns, commentaries and so on. This first line of interpretation, or tradition, can guide us to a more accurate understanding of the Bible.

Tradition communicates to us what the believers of previous generations understood the Scriptures to mean when it speaks about certain subjects. This tradition has authority, but its authority is always secondary to the Scriptures themselves and is valuable only to the extent it truly interprets the Word of God. These teachings must always be compared with and corrected by the Word of God. Many false interpretations have arisen through the ages of the Church because they were never compared with the infallible standard of God's absolute truth.

Even though Protestants reject the *Magisterium* idea of tradition, their sense of individualism is laden with its own problems. Frequently people have attempted to give their own interpretation as the standard of belief. It is not uncommon for a person to boast that he or she has a novel interpretation. That can be a salutary warning that such an interpretation has never been accepted before because it is not correct. There are hundreds of sects and cults associated with the broad span of Christendom that are the result of private interpretation divorced from the historic roots of Christianity. Interpreting the Scriptures in isolation is as dangerous as yielding the rights of interpretation to an authoritative body of the Church. Although the priesthood of the believer is a precious doctrine, it cannot be used to argue that a Christian acts apart from what previous generations have taught. The influence of historic understanding is a valuable guide to contemporary thinking.

Protestants have done well in holding to the doctrine of *sola scriptura*. Where they have not done well is in the application of the historic roots of the faith to the interpretation of Scripture. A distrust of the past, emanating from a misunderstanding of tradition, has led to an opening of Pandora's Box where a myriad of individual interpretations has led to mass confusion. It is no accident that the majority of the pseudo-Christian cults gain their adherents from the Protestant community. Without the ballast of learning from the past, Evangelicals are subject to every novelty of interpretation. The list of negative effects could be expanded greatly. However, the greatest loss is a sense of continuity with the past. This goes beyond just a mere ignorance of church history. It seems that many Christians do not consider themselves to be part of a larger community of faith.

So how should we respond? The following are some practical applications for the Evangelical Church of the twenty-first century. The first step is to encourage a Berean-like attitude among Christians in the study of the Word of God. The Bereans were commended because they searched the Scriptures to determine if the things taught by Paul and Silas were true (Acts 17:10-11). Even so, we must

# FIRM AND HOLD THE TRADITIONS WHICH YOU WERE TAUGHT

## 2 THESSALONIANS 2:15

determine what the Word of God *says* before we can determine what it *means*. We need to understand the message of God's Word in its original context and how the people who first received the message understood it. This may appear to be self-evident, but it is actually a radical reorientation of how the Bible functions in much of the Church today. The Scriptures are not a list of prooftexts or a jumping-off place for us to give our own message. The Bible must be taken seriously and given a central place in our worship and our lives. If we fail to understand the Bible as God intended, we will also fail in our attempt to apply it correctly.

Second, we need to pay attention to the wisdom of the past. Not everyone is a historian, but we can all pray earnestly that God would kindle a passion in our hearts to know and understand the legacy of the acts and thoughts of God's people. There is a precious tradition undergirding the Church that includes the flow of biblical interpretation by men and women of God who prayed over and thought deeply about the text of God's Word. Their spirit-filled insights are a rich heritage that will keep us from wandering into the ravines of meaningless speculation and wrong conclusions.

How do we do that? Trusted commentaries, historic creeds and confessions, biographies of great Christians, and histories of the Church and its progress of doctrine are valuable resources for anyone interested in staying true to the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3). This too is tradition. It is not Scripture, but it is good tradition. ■



## Musical Instruments

Duane Garrett

Only a modest number of remains of musical instruments have been recovered by archaeologists. However, abundant evidence exists in ancient texts (such as the Psalms) and art (such as Egyptian tomb paintings) attesting to the ancient peoples' extensive use of instruments to create music and leaving no doubt that musical instruments were widely employed in the ancient world, including Israel. Thus the paucity of relics of ancient instruments is a matter of their fragility rather than their scarcity.

The vocabulary for musical instruments in biblical Hebrew is also fairly extensive. However, precise translation of many Hebrew words for instruments is made difficult by the lack of description in the Bible. Even ancient translators, such as those behind the Greek

Septuagint, often had little understanding of the meanings of Hebrew musical terms. Adding to the difficulty is the fact that modern associations with certain names can be misleading. For example, *shofar* is often translated "trumpet," which usually brings to mind a brass instrument rather than what it actually was—a ram's horn. The English "tambourine" suggests a hand drum with metal rings that jingle when shaken, but ancient Israelite hand drums probably did not have metal rings. On the other hand, ancient artwork from Egypt and Mesopotamia provides us with clear images of many ancient instruments.

The Israelites, like their neighbors, had three basic types of instrumentation:

**Stringed instruments**, such as the lyre and harp. The lyre is well attested to by ancient Israel, but the harp is more problematic. Some authorities argue that the word translated

"harp" may actually refer to a kind of bass lyre, or even to a lute, and that the true harp did not exist in Israel. On the other hand, evidence exists from ancient Egypt of an instrument that is obviously a harp, and thus they may have existed in Israel as well.

**Percussion instruments** of two kinds: drums and tambourines are percussion instruments made with skin stretched over some kind of frame; and "idiophones" produce sound by vibrating, but they have neither strings nor skin membranes. They are objects such as bells, gongs, rattles, clappers and cymbals, and may be made of various materials, including metal, wood, hardened clay, or bone. 2 Samuel 6:5 and Nehemiah 12:27 refer to the use of these.

**Wind instruments**, such as pipes, trumpets or the *shofar* (ram's horn), are well attested to in the Bible (flute-like instruments in 1 Kings 1:40; silver trumpets in Num 10:2; the *shofar* in Joel 2:1).

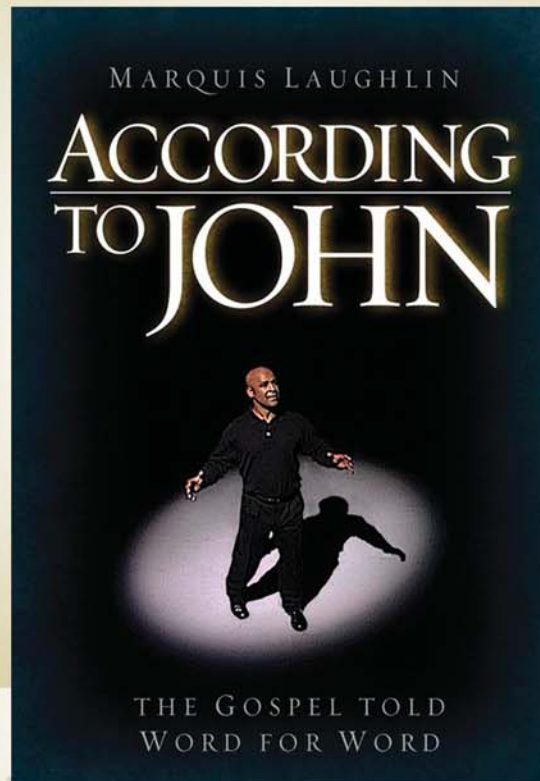
Such instruments were widely used for entertainment and boisterous parties (Isa 5:12), but they were also used for celebratory worship (Ps 81:2; 150:1-5). The first reference to musical instruments in the Bible is Genesis 4:21, where Jubal, one of Cain's descendants, is described as "the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe." Musical instruments were used at various other celebrations as well (Gen 31:27; Job 21:11-12), including military victories (Exod 15:20). The *shofar* was used primarily for signaling, especially during war (Judg 3:27; Jer 6:1; 1 Sam 13:3). Starting with the period of the monarchy, instruments were used in court (1 Sam 19:9). In addition, they were also used at the temple to accompany religious lyrics (such as are preserved in the Psalms) (Amos 5:23; Ps 150:3-5). ■



Duane Garrett is an editor of the forthcoming *Archaeology Study Bible*.

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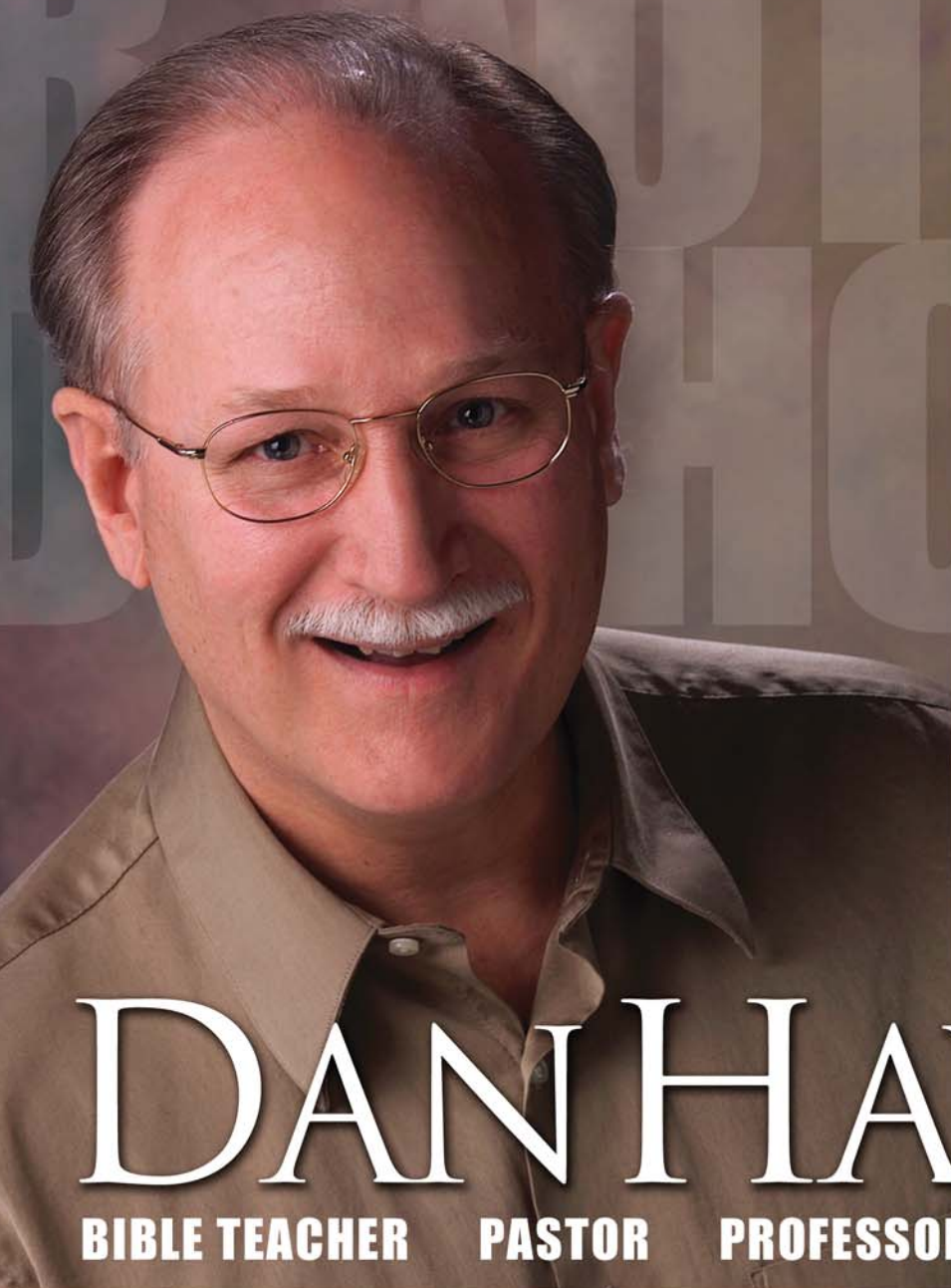
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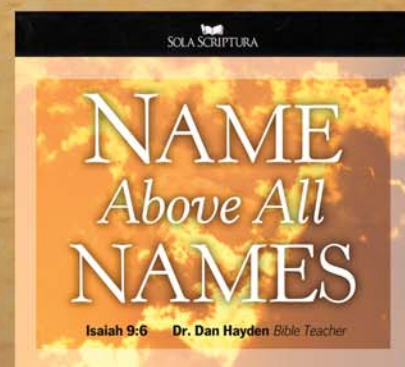
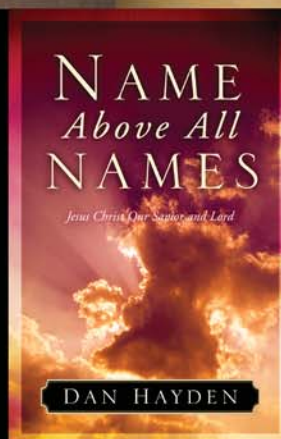
“What I care about is that the Word of God is accurate and true and rightly divided...”

# DAN HAYDEN

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## The Last Days

Dr. Dan Hayden

A man with a sign that said “Judgment Day Is Coming” stood on the corner of a busy city street in 1969 and yelled to passersby, “The last days are upon us!” An author electrified his readers by announcing that he had done the math, and according to his calculations, Christ was coming back in 1988—so in the mid-’80s the Christian community was told that they were living in the last days. Yet the years have come and gone—and we are still waiting. So how much more time do we have to wait until the last days really come? Well, would it surprise you to know that for two thousand years people have been living in the last days?

The writer to the Hebrews begins his apologetic to the Jews by saying, “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son” (Heb. 1:1-2). This beginning statement in the book of Hebrews sets the stage for a convincing argument to the Jews that the New Testament Gospel of Jesus Christ is the culmination of all that God had said through the prophets of Israel. God had spoken through prophets, but the last installment of God’s special revelation to man was spoken through the message of His Son. God has no more to say to us. We are living in the last days because Jesus Christ and His Gospel are the final episode of the divine story of salvation for humanity.

The phrase “the last days” obviously includes the last days of the last days. In other words, events still future to the early years of the twenty-first century are also included in the last days. However, it is important to realize that the last days were initiated by the first appearance of the Son of God on earth. It was then that Christ actually accomplished the redemption of humans and their environment by His death on

the cross (Rom. 8:19-25). So the New Testament is indeed the last volume of God’s trilogy (the Law, the Prophets, and the New Testament). It is in this writing that we see the Son of God conquer sin and death and then return in great glory to establish His kingdom of righteousness and peace on the earth. The New Testament is the final volume of God’s message to humanity—therefore all the days that follow it comprise the last days.

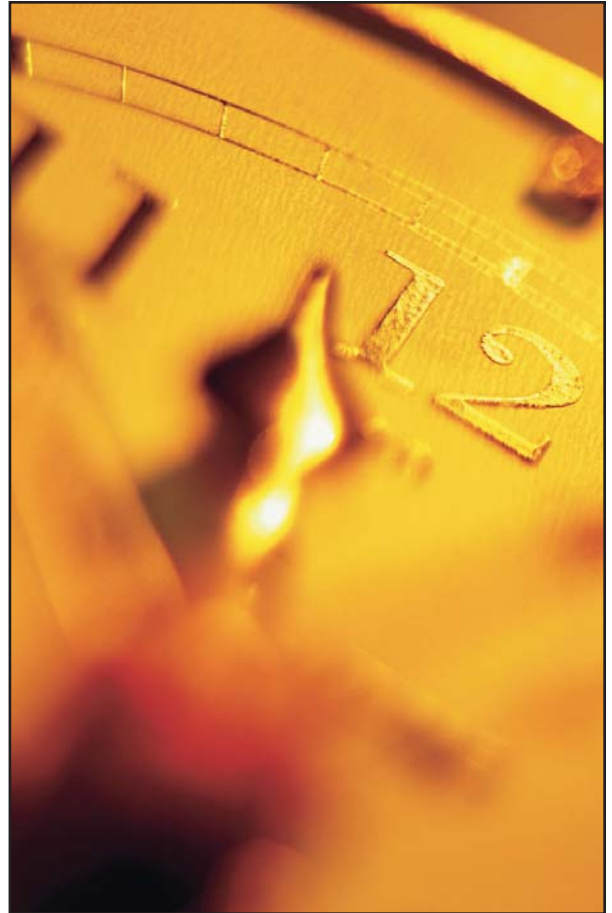
The word “last” in this phrase is the Greek word *eschatos*, which is where we get our English word “eschatological,” referring to anything in the future associated with the final events of world history. *Eschatos* is the superlative form of the idea of continuity or contiguity—in other words, the farthest reaches of place or time (the latter end, the uttermost, the finale). It is truly the end of all things, “the last days.”

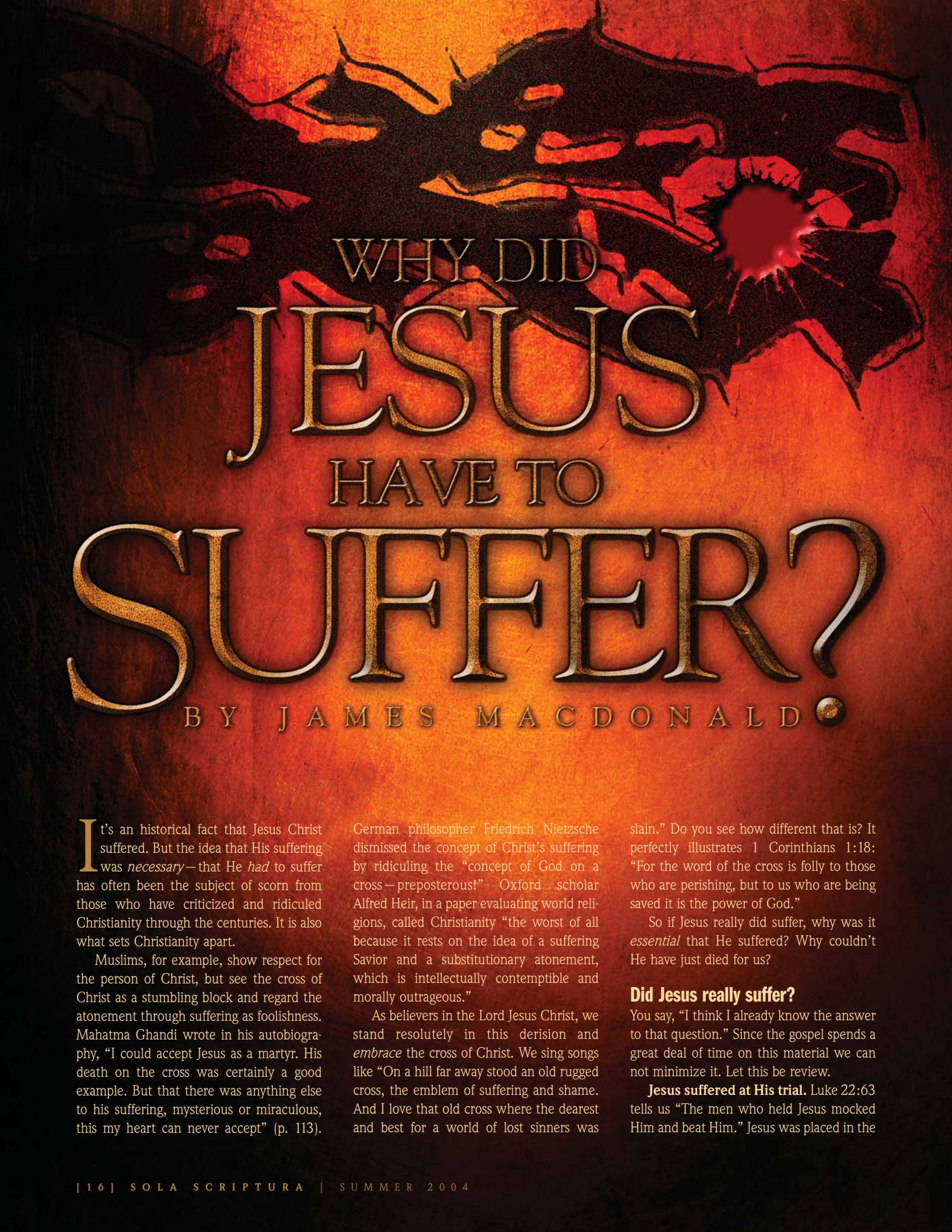
F. F. Bruce has some instructive thoughts on the phrase “in these last days”:

The story of divine revelation is a story of progression up to Christ, but there is no progression beyond Him. It is “at the end of these days” that God has spoken in Him, and by this phrase our author means much more than “recently”; it is a literal rendering of the Hebrew phrase which is used in the Old Testament to denote the epoch when the words of the prophets will

be fulfilled, and its use here means that the appearance of Christ “once for all at the end of the age” (Ch. 9:26 RSV) has inaugurated that time of fulfillment. God’s previous spokesmen were His servants, but for the proclamation of His last word to man He has chosen His Son.

So here is what God is saying: You have read the first two episodes of My story—the Law of Moses and the record of the Prophets. Now I am giving you the final installment—the coming of the King and His triumphant return. There will not be a volume four. This is the last thing I am going to say to you. It is the climactic conclusion of My trilogy. It is the LAST DAYS. ■





# WHY DID JESUS HAVE TO SUFFER?

BY JAMES MACDONALD

**I**t's an historical fact that Jesus Christ suffered. But the idea that His suffering was *necessary*—that He *had* to suffer has often been the subject of scorn from those who have criticized and ridiculed Christianity through the centuries. It is also what sets Christianity apart.

Muslims, for example, show respect for the person of Christ, but see the cross of Christ as a stumbling block and regard the atonement through suffering as foolishness. Mahatma Ghandi wrote in his autobiography, "I could accept Jesus as a martyr. His death on the cross was certainly a good example. But that there was anything else to his suffering, mysterious or miraculous, this my heart can never accept" (p. 113).

German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche dismissed the concept of Christ's suffering by ridiculing the "concept of God on a cross—preposterous!" Oxford scholar Alfred Heir, in a paper evaluating world religions, called Christianity "the worst of all because it rests on the idea of a suffering Savior and a substitutionary atonement, which is intellectually contemptible and morally outrageous."

As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we stand resolutely in this derision and *embrace* the cross of Christ. We sing songs like "On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross, the emblem of suffering and shame. And I love that old cross where the dearest and best for a world of lost sinners was

slain." Do you see how different that is? It perfectly illustrates 1 Corinthians 1:18: "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

So if Jesus really did suffer, why was it *essential* that He suffered? Why couldn't He have just died for us?

## **Did Jesus really suffer?**

You say, "I think I already know the answer to that question." Since the gospel spends a great deal of time on this material we can not minimize it. Let this be review.

**Jesus suffered at His trial.** Luke 22:63 tells us "The men who held Jesus mocked Him and beat Him." Jesus was placed in the

# WILLINGLY, HE WALKED THAT ROAD, SUFFERED, AND DIED UPON THAT CROSS

custody of Roman soldiers. Think about those guys for a minute. Roman. Coliseum. Lions. These soldiers were hardly sissies. In fact, they made their living inflicting pain upon people. We see this in their treatment of Christ. Scripture tells us that they were like bullies circling a smaller child, pushing and jeering him. They stripped Him naked, exposing, humiliating and insulting Him.

**Jesus suffered at His scourging.** By the time Pilate had given up trying to release Jesus in a just way, Jesus had endured more than 36 hours without sleep, bore severe humiliation and now faced torture. "When he had scourged Jesus, [Pilate] delivered Him to be crucified" (Matthew 27:26).

**Jesus suffered on the road to Calvary.** Some would say that Jesus' meritorious work was only upon the cross but Scripture describes Jesus' payment for sin had already begun, and now continued on this road to Calvary. As strong as Jesus was, and I believe He was strong, He couldn't carry this 200 lb. cross for the two miles from the Praetorium to Calvary. His ravaged body fell under the weight of it so the Roman soldier reached into the crowd and grabbed Simon of Cyrene and said, "you're carrying it."

Make no mistake about it, when the Bible says Jesus *suffered* for your sins, He suffered... at His trial, at His scourging, and on the road to the cross. Then more familiar to us, Jesus suffered on the cross.

Death by crucifixion includes all the horror that pain and death can offer. This ghastly execution, embraced by the Romans, involved dizziness, thirst, starvation, sleeplessness, traumatic fever, shame, long continuance of torment, horror of anticipation, mortification of intended wounds, all intensified just up to the point at which the person could endure it but stopping just short of the point where unconsciousness would bring some relief. And it was designed to keep the person conscious and suffering.

One thing is clear: first century executions were not like modern ones, for they did not seek a quick, painless death nor the preservation of any measure of dignity for

the criminal. On the contrary, they sought an agonizing torture which completely humiliated the accused. It is important that we understand this, for it helps us realize the suffering in Christ's death.

Let it never be in doubt, Jesus suffered.

## Why did Jesus have to suffer?

Now the all-important question: *Why did Jesus have to suffer?* Why couldn't God have just let Him die to pay for our sins?

First John 4:10 says, "And this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the payment for our sin." The key word here is *payment*. The Bible explains this payment in many different ways:

He died to give us life. (1 John 5:11)

He died to bring us to God. (1 Peter 3:18)

He died the just for the unjust. (1 Peter 3:18)

He died for our sins. (Hebrews 9:26)

He died to save us. (Romans 10:9)

He died to give us eternal life. (John 3:16)

The bottom line is *payment*. It wasn't enough for Him to die. Jesus had to pay a debt. Remember the old chorus?: "He paid a debt He did not owe. I owed a debt I could not pay."

Some would still ask, "What debt? What payment was owed?" He paid to satisfy the demands of God's anger.

Peace with God is the absence of anger. As much as God loves you, He hates your sin with a holy, burning hatred that you cannot comprehend. But He does love you, and the only way that He could embrace you was to take His hatred for your sin and make someone else pay for it. (See Romans 5:1) And it couldn't be just anyone—it had to be someone perfect. Since we're all sinners, He came Himself.

That's the gospel; that's the whole subject.

Hear it again for the first time: You can be forgiven and washed clean. James 3:2

says we all fall in various ways. But we don't have to carry that sin around. We can be forgiven. But God would not do that lightly. God wouldn't say, "Oh, I see your sin, but never mind." Someone had to pay for those sins that we chose for ourselves.

It was Jesus.

Willingly, He walked that road, suffered, and died upon that cross and God, somehow in His infiniteness, laid all of our sinfulness there upon His Son.

There was no other way. There is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

So, here are four reasons that Jesus had to suffer and what difference that must make in my life and yours:

**To pay for the sins of mankind.**

Therefore, I should admit that I am a sinner.

**To satisfy the demands of God's wrath.** Therefore I should turn from my sin to Christ.

**To purchase the opportunity of having our sins forgiven.** Therefore, I should believe in Him.

**To provide the way to eternal life.** To get a gift, you must receive it. "The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Have you? Do you know that Jesus is the gift of eternal life? It's as simple as that. John 1:12 says, "As many as received Him, to those he has given the authority to be called the children of God." We're not all God's children. Only the ones who have received Him. His suffering makes that gift possible. ■



*Dr. James MacDonald is the founding pastor of Harvest Bible Chapel in Rolling Meadows, IL and radio Bible teacher on Walk in the Word (walkintheword.com)*

*which emphasizes the precise exposition of God's Word and its practical life application. James and his wife Kathy have three children—Luke, Landon, and Abigail—and reside in the northwest suburbs of Chicago.*

# The Mentelin Bible

Dr. Herbert Samworth

Many people are aware that Martin Luther translated the Scriptures into the German language during his time at the Wartburg Castle. However, what is not as well known is that Luther's translation, known as the September Testament, was the nineteenth printed edition of the German Bible. The story behind the printing of the Bible in the German language is a demonstration of God's providence in preparing for the Reformation of the sixteenth century.

The development of printing by moveable type is credited to Johannes Gutenberg, who printed the first book at Mainz, Germany in 1455. The Gutenberg Bible was in Latin, the language of the Church and the universities. Exactly when, and by whom, the idea came to print the Bible in German is unknown. However, a strong movement to translate the Bible into vernacular languages had spread throughout Europe during the previous centuries. It was common practice to translate the Psalms and other books into the language of the people for use in devotional exercises.

Whatever may have been the circumstances, Johann Mentelin began to print the Bible in German in 1466. Mentelin began his career as a scribe and illuminator but, foreseeing the economic impact that printing by moveable type was going to make, he changed professions and became the first printer in Strassburg. This may have been as early as 1458, just three years after Gutenberg's Vulgate edition of 1455.

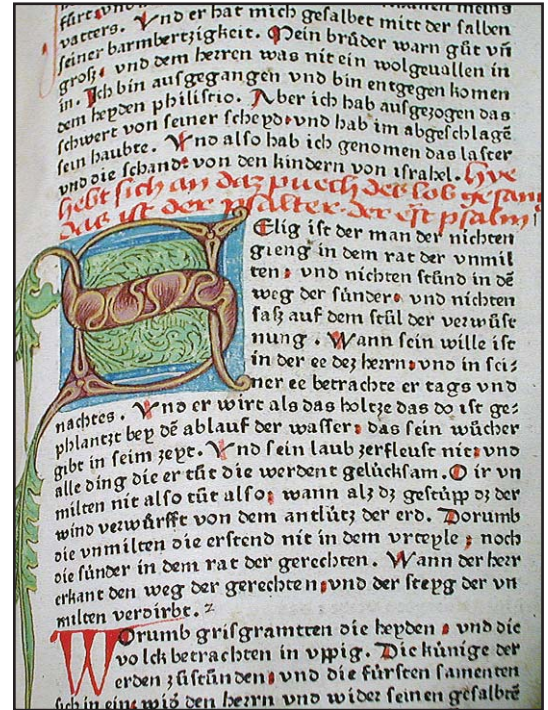
But what manuscripts did Mentelin use to print the German Bible? There are a number of surviving manuscripts in German from Wolfenbüttel for the Old Testament and Tepl and Freiburg for the New Testament. Wilhem Walther, in his book *German Bible Translations*

of the Middle Ages, concluded, after careful investigation, that the text of the Mentelin Bible is more accurate than the text of these manuscripts. How did this situation occur? Apparently Mentelin had access to manuscripts of the Old Latin translation, also known as the *Itala*, which proved to be more accurate than the Vulgate manuscripts. As a result, the Mentelin Bible is an extremely accurate translation of the Scriptures into the German language.

The Mentelin Bible contained some 406 leaves printed in double columns with 61 lines per column. Although it apparently lacked a title page, folios, and signatures, it was a typographical monument. The book was red-lettered after printing to mark punctuation and capitals. The rubricator also supplied the titles of books, chapter numbers and headings, and indicators at the beginning and ending of each book. Initials, supplied by hand, were given at the beginning of prefaces, books and chapters. Evidence points to the date of June 27, 1466, as its completion, making it the first book printed by moveable type in the German language, or any modern language.

Although the book is a tribute to the art of printing, its spiritual value must be gauged by the impact that it had on the German people. For the first time in their history, the German-speaking people possessed the complete Scriptures in a printed format. In contrast, it was not until 1535 that Miles Coverdale printed the first complete copy of the Scriptures in the English language.

Church History assigns the beginning of the Reformation as October 31, 1517, when Martin Luther posted his Ninety-five Theses on



the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. However, the years preceding Luther were ones of preparation, when the hand of God's providence set the stage for the recovery of the Gospel. One of the instruments that God used was the translation of His Word in the language of the German people. The Mentelin Bible was the first of the eighteen editions of His Word that helped prepare the way. The Reformation came to a people who had been given the Scriptures in their own vernacular. How thankful we should be that God used His Word for the reformation of His Church! ■

The Mentelin Bible is part of The Van Kampen Collection, one of the largest private collections of Bibles, artifacts, and biblical manuscripts in the world. The Collection is the centerpiece of Sola Scriptura's ministry, and is housed at The Scriptorium, an interactive museum at The Holy Land Experience in Orlando, Florida. This book is presently on display in the Special Exhibit Room at The Scriptorium. The Exhibit is called *Light in the Dark Ages* and is an illustration of the power of God's Word to dispel the spiritual darkness that had enveloped much of Europe before the Reformation.

## The Burden

*Stu Kinniburgh*

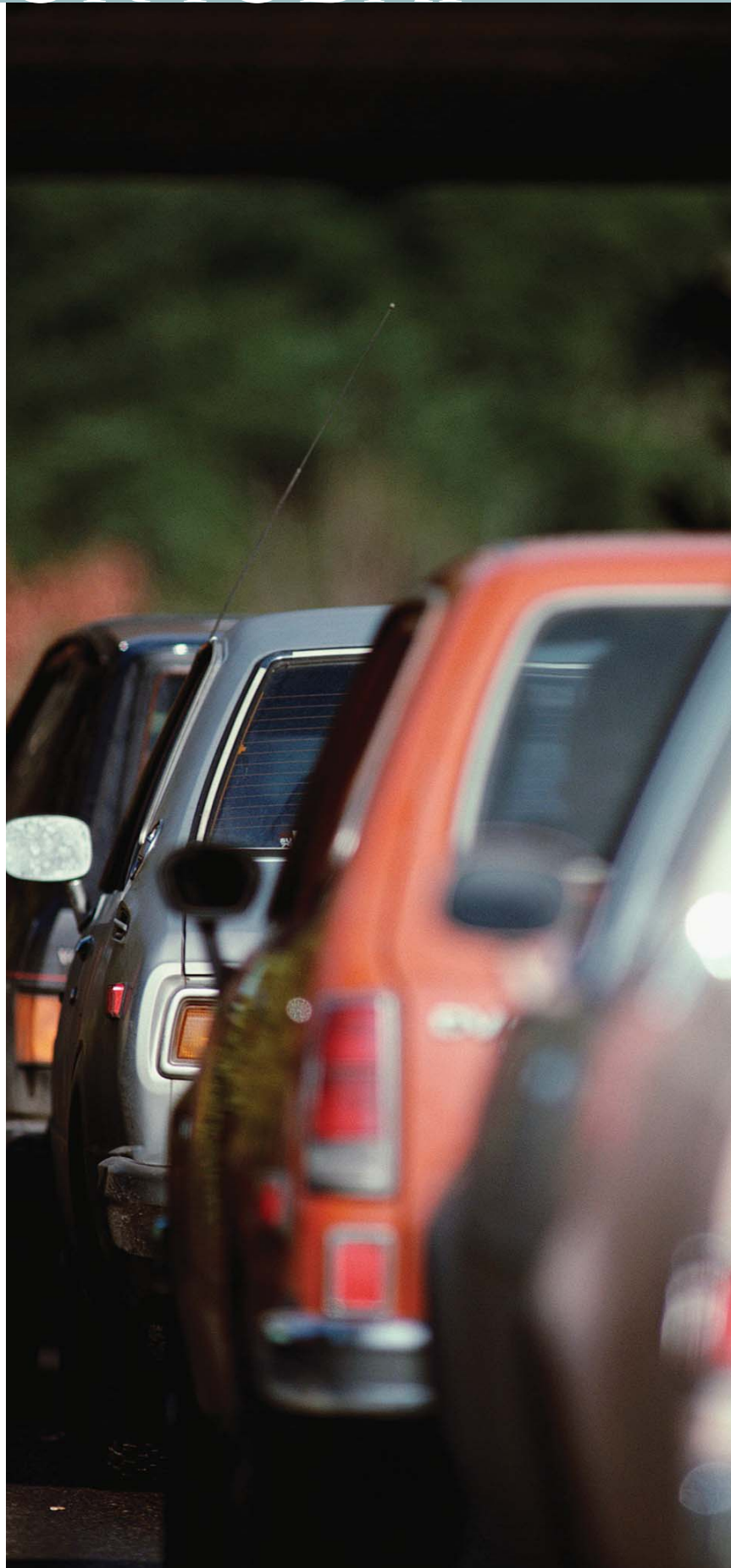
Something happened to me recently that gave me new insight into the mind of God. I was driving to work, and while sitting at a stop sign I was hit from behind by another car. The other driver was a young man who expressed great sorrow and remorse at his action. He was obviously shaken by the ordeal but was extremely polite and cooperative. We exchanged information, and as the damage seemed minimal, we went our separate ways. We both got estimates for the repairs, which in each case was near \$300, and spoke several times on the phone as we gathered all the necessary information for the insurance companies. I advised him that it might be less expensive for him to pay for the repairs out of his pocket and avoid the insurance charges, and after getting all the details from his company, he agreed.

During one of our phone calls he expressed an interest in visiting The Holy Land Experience here in Orlando. Since he seemed like such an impressive young man, I sent him several tickets so that he and his family could come see the Christmas program.

As the holidays approached, I decided that the body repairs on my car were not nearly as important as fixing a small leak in my transmission, so I determined that I would apply the money from the accident to fix the leak first and then fix the bumper later. Even though I had not yet received the settlement money, I took my car to the transmission shop for the work. When I went to pick it up, the manager gave me the keys and said that my car was all set and that there would be no charge! I couldn't believe it at first; the repair could have easily cost over \$100, but the manager was insistent that I not pay.

As I drove away, a seed began to grow in my mind: since I had been forgiven this debt for which I had purposed to use the money from the accident, perhaps God was encouraging me to forgive this young man's debt to me. The more I thought about it, the more convinced I became that God had done this so that He could be glorified in this young man's life. I started to call the young man to tell him the good news, but then I thought it might be more significant for me to wait until he called me to arrange for payment and then to tell him of God's provision for him to be free from the debt. So I waited. And I waited. I knew that each time he looked at the front of his car, he must remember the debt that he owed, yet for whatever reason, he did not call.

This caused me to think about the forgiveness that God offers to us. Psalm 86:5 states, "For You, Lord, are good, and ready to



forgive, and abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You.” He has determined to forgive those whom He has chosen, yet we all must approach Him in humility and penitence, admitting our sin with the realization that only His grace offers forgiveness and relief from our burden. In this, we are comforted by the words given to Israel by God in 2 Chronicles 7:14: “If... My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” Without the realization and acknowledgment of our sin, we are saddled with its effect on our lives; it is impossible to escape.

Further, I think about our day-to-day living and how as Christians we know that we can take our burdens and lay them at the feet of Christ. Yet many of us wait until things get so bad that we either cry out in utter desperation or become convinced that things are so foul that God couldn’t possibly forgive, so we don’t even ask. All too often, we get used to the dents and dings in our lives, and we learn to live with them. May it never be so! One big difference between our relationship with God and this young man’s relationship with me is that, unlike this young man, who does not know that I am ready to forgive his debt to me, we know that God is ready to forgive and restore us.

Each day that we see the “wreck” in our lives that sin causes, we are reminded of the debt that Christ paid on our behalf, and we should be

encouraged to go before Him and confess our disobedience, offering a life dedicated to serving Him. We can rest in the truth found in 1 John 1:9: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Armed with this knowledge, we should be all the more ready to apply the words found in Psalm 51:

Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness;  
According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my  
transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.  
For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.  
Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight,  
So that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You  
judge...

Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation;  
Then my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness.  
O Lord, open my lips, that my mouth may declare Your praise.  
For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it;  
You are not pleased with burnt offering.  
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;  
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. ■

Without the realization  
and acknowledgment of  
our sin, we are saddled  
with its effect on our  
lives; it is impossible  
to escape.

**Author’s note:** Shortly before going to press with this article, I received a call from this young man. He expressed regret that several months had passed since we last spoke, but said that he had finally gotten most of the money together to pay for the repair. I told him about the way that God had provided for him to be free from the debt and that he did not owe me anything. He asked me if I was sure, saying that he was willing to accept the responsibility for his actions, but I told him that I believed God had done this in our lives for some greater purpose. I know that I had to come to terms with issues like forgiveness, obedience, and the true source and purpose of money. I asked him to consider what God wanted to teach him through this incident. I’ll quote as best as I can remember what his words were next: “I know this may sound strange, but I believe that I was supposed to hit your car that day. I’ve learned so much over the last few months; I don’t think I’ll ever be the same. I know that God is doing something in my life. If you ever need anything at all, just call me.” Those last words were said with such conviction that I know he truly meant what he said. Our response to God as we consider what He has done in our lives should be no less heart-felt: “Lord, if you ever need anything at all, just call me.”

# Food for the Soul

Renaut van der Riet

A few months ago, while traveling through the Old Testament, I stumbled across a little verse in the book of Jeremiah. It was hidden in one of those not-so-famous chapters that you only read when you're trying to get through the Bible in a year. The verse reads, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts" (Jeremiah 15:16). From the moment I read these words, I felt the deep passion that was captured within them. I heard the pleasure in Jeremiah's voice. He knew that he had uncovered a treasure beyond words, and I longed for that same kind of passion and satisfaction.

This simple verse has since become a splinter in my mind, challenging me to ask myself whether I am experiencing God's Word as it was meant to be experienced.

When I was fourteen, I lived in a small coastal town on the edge of the Namib Desert. That shoreline is called the skeleton coast, because when ships used to run aground

there, those who survived the shipwreck would soon die from the dry heat of the desert. My father and I would take frequent outings into the desert, and I was always struck by the vast expanse of nothing but sand. I remember thinking how hopeless I would feel to be lost in a desert such as the Namib. Imagine the hunger and agonizing thirst you would feel after just a few days... and your reaction to a sudden discovery of food and water when you had abandoned all hope! It is this kind of passionate cry of joy that I hear in Jeremiah's voice as he refers to God's words. Thy words where found! Thy words where found! And I did eat them!

Jeremiah's metaphor gives us a beautiful, physical description of a spiritual experience, allowing us to bridge the gap between the tangible and the theoretical. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them." (*italics added*) There is something deeply satisfying about a great meal. When I think back on eating my favorite meal, I can almost taste it. The memory is vivid, because each bite brought with it a gratification that encompassed my body. Jeremiah discovered that God's Word can satis-

## Noah's Ark—Have they found it?

Question: Ken, over the years, there have been lots of supposed sightings of a boat-like structure on Mt. Ararat, with claims that this is Noah's Ark. Has Noah's Ark been found?



Ken Ham's Answer: Well, let's just get down to the bottom line. No, Noah's Ark has not been discovered. I know that in recent times some researchers have claimed there's a boat-like structure at the bottom of Mt. Ararat that they think is the Ark. But geologists have shown this is just a geological formation. It certainly would be exciting to find the remains of the Ark. At the same time, I'm also reminded of the rich man in Luke 16 who wanted to go back and warn his brothers about judgment after death. He thought that if one came back from the dead, his brothers would believe. And what did Abraham say? "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." I don't think finding the Ark will suddenly convince people the Bible is true. If they don't believe God's Word, finding Noah's Ark is not going to convince them. Maybe that's why the Lord hasn't allowed us to find it.

"If dinosaurs were on the Ark, which we believe, why don't we find them alive today?" That's one of the questions tackled by **Ken Ham** in his free dinosaur booklet. You can receive a copy by calling 1-800-950-9507, or by going to the Answers in Genesis website: [www.answersingenesis.org](http://www.answersingenesis.org).

fy even more deeply than the best meal; God's Word can bring us a satisfaction of the soul.

Satisfaction of the soul. The very thought of such a deep sense of fulfillment stirs up a strong desire in me to *experience* it first hand. I long to feel such an immense passion and desire to devour God's words. I long to encounter God's voice as Moses did to hear Him speak to me as He did to the prophets of old or to the apostles. It is so easy to delve into God's Word and not experience it but rather read it as a historic, theological book, documenting His words. But, what if He can speak to *me* through it? What if He intended His Word to be living and active in *my* life, as Hebrews 4:12 states? What if His *voice* could be found in the pages of this book called God's Word?

I am discovering that the Bible is not primarily a book of *theology*, but a book of *intimacy*. It is not merely a book given to us so that we can *study* God, but one given so that we can *know* God—that is, to hear Him and to see Him. It gives us the opportunity to experience God's voice in our lives as the men and women of old experienced God's voice in

theirs. David writes in Psalm 63:1, "O God, You are my God, earnestly I seek You; my soul thirsts for You, my body longs for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water." A few verses later he writes, "My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise You!" (Psalm 63:5). You see, our deepest parts will not be satisfied not by words on a page, but by the presence of the Living God. There must be a voice behind those words, and it is that voice we must discover. I believe that when we approach God's Word with a desire to be satisfied, we will find it to be far more than a book of truth; we will find it to be a banquet for the soul.

We often approach the Scriptures on *our* terms, with little time to spare and a very specific agenda in mind. We want to spend our allotted time in devotion and quickly find something that will inspire us, a verse we can apply to our life in the days ahead. If, however, we desire to discover God's voice and feed our souls, we must be willing to set our structured time and agenda aside and wait on God. We must come to His Word on *His* terms.

It seems we have more to keep us enter-

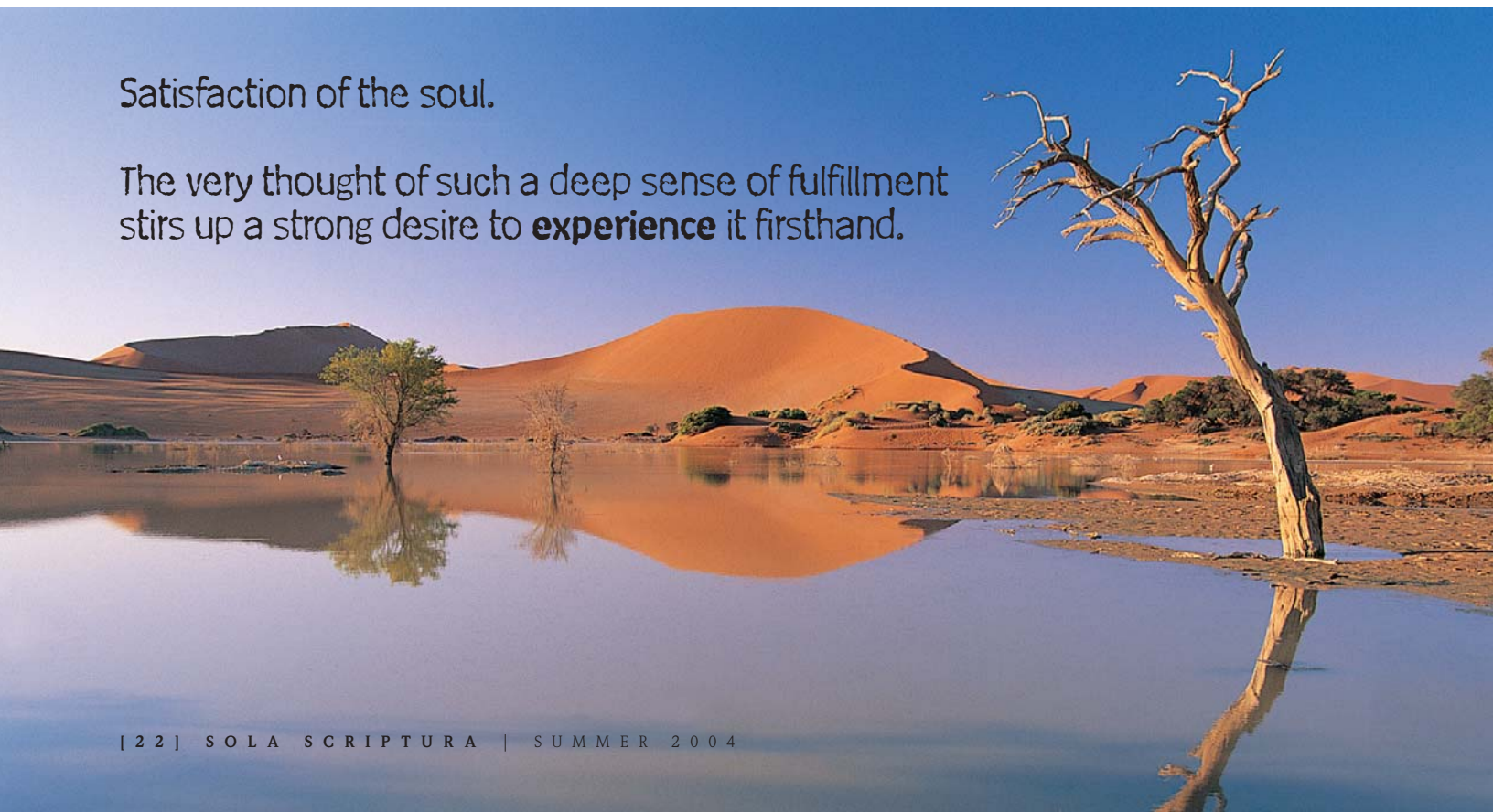
tained in this day and age than ever before, and yet we find ourselves less satisfied with each coming day. This holds true in our current Christian culture as well. We are busier than ever, with expanding ministries, and we have more resources to help us to better study God and His Word than we could possibly use in a lifetime. Yet, we sometimes lack the deep satisfaction that comes from an intimate relationship with God. When we study His Word, we must *linger*, and we must *listen*, expecting God to speak. It is a process that goes against the grain of our culture but opens the door to God's voice.

It is my prayer that we will approach God's Word with the same tenacity that Moses had when he asked to see God's face (Exodus 33:12-23). Let us not be satisfied until we find God's voice and hear Him speak to our hearts. Only then will we, too, experience a deeper fulfillment than ever before and be able to say, as Jeremiah did, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart."

May the Lord bless you as you seek after Him, and find Him, in His Word. ■

## Satisfaction of the soul.

The very thought of such a deep sense of fulfillment stirs up a strong desire to **experience** it firsthand.



## It's All In the Numbers

Charles Cooper

Just how much is 175,000? Well, it really depends on what the reference is. If the subject is the cost of raising a child through graduation from college—a whopping \$800,000—then \$175,000 isn't very much. If the subject is pennies, then stuffing 175,000 pennies in paper rolls yields only \$1,750, which is a lot of trouble for a small return. If the subject is days, then 175,000 days is 480 years, which pales when compared to eternity. But what if 175,000 refers to sins?

While watching Mel Gibson's film *The Passion of the Christ*, I was forced to come to grips with the fact that my sin caused the death of Christ. As a follower of Jesus Christ, I know that His death is the only payment acceptable to God for my sins. Jesus Christ died for me!

As I sat watching the movie, my mind began to play with the numbers. Just how many sins had I committed since my birth? How many more sins will I commit before I die? Let's do the numbers. Psalm 90:10 sets the boundaries of man's days on the earth as 70 years on average. If I live to be 70 years old, how many sins would I potentially commit? Seventy years equates to about 25,550 days. By picking a conservative number, let's say six sins a day for 70 years, at the end of 70 years I personally would have committed 153,300 sins. Now as I look back over my life, I realize that between ages 14 and 45, six sins a day is far too conservative. Compensating for it, I add an additional 50 sins a month for those years, totaling 18,600 sins. My grand total is 171,900 sins, and since I've been somewhat conservative, that can comfortably be rounded up to 175,000.

That's just my sin alone. What about the sins of the whole world? Using the same formula to calculate the total number of sins of every generation in the entire world would result in a number too large to comprehend. As



I sat watching Gibson's film, the sheer magnitude of my personal sin and its effect on Christ overwhelmed me. Sadly, I realized that most, perhaps all, of my personal sins were so unnecessary. How many sins did I commit more than once, even after confessing to God that the act was sinful?

This scenario is difficult and shameful to

admit, but the fact of the matter is that Christ would have had to suffer and die in the exact same way if only one sin had ever been committed. The awfulness of sin is not in the total *number* of sins, but in the nature of sin. I will never view the declaration "Christ died for my sins" in the same way again! Thanks, Mel, for the wake-up call! ■

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