



# Seek The Old Paths

*“Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths. . . and walk therein”*  
(Jeremiah 6:16)

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## THE COMFORTER “PARAKLETOS”

Randy Kea

***The word “Comforter” has an exclusive application to the apostles of our Lord and was special to them and not general to all Christians for all ages.***

No Bible subject is more misunderstood by the religious world than the Holy Spirit and His work. Even in the Lord’s church there is a lack of study and knowledge on this vital topic. The Lord said in John 14:16, *“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever...”* In this passage the word “Comforter” is from the Greek word *parakletos* which means to call to one’s side, to aid as a legal assistant or counselor. Further in this passage, the word “another” is from *allos*. In the original language there are two words translated “another.” One of them means “another of a different kind,” but the word used in John 14:16 means “another of the same kind.” This indicates that although Jesus is returning to His Father, He would send the apostles the Comforter who would take His place as their teacher, guide, counselor, aid and intercessor.

I recently listened to a sermon archived on the website of the University Church of Christ in Montgomery, Alabama titled *“Spiritual Rhythms: A Lesson on the Holy Spirit”* by Andrew Itson. The archived date, if you wish to listen, is Wednesday, May 23, 2018. In his presentation Andrew teaches that the “Comforter” passages in John 14:16, 26, 15:26 and 16:7 apply to all Christians — even today. Denominational preachers, especially of the Neo-Pentecostal per-

suation, propagate this notion constantly, but it was distressing to hear it from a brother in Christ. It is even more disturbing that the elders of the church there did not correct this publicly and have allowed it to remain on their website. I emailed the elders about this matter twice, but to date, have not received a response.

The late and lamented brother Franklin Camp said, “The misuse of these passages on the Holy Spirit is perhaps the taproot of the greatest misunderstanding in the religious world. When these passages are quoted and applied to Christians today, it prepares the groundwork for the misunderstanding of the Holy Spirit in relation to the Christian.” (*The Work of the Holy Spirit in Redemption*, page 119. This whole book should be required reading in all of our preaching schools!)

Clearly, these passages on the Comforter in John chapters 14-16 apply exclusively to the apostles. In this article I will show this to be the case.

### THE APOSTLES AND THE COMFORTER

In the conversation recorded only by John (chapters 13-16 ending in the prayer of our Lord for unity in 17), the word “Comforter” applies only to the apostles. The simple wording in these passages demonstrate conclusively that the word “Comforter” has

an exclusive application to the apostles of our Lord and was special to them and not general to all Christians for all ages. If you cross examine these passages you will learn that the Holy Spirit is called “the Comforter” or the “Spirit of truth.”

The Lord summarized the Comforter’s work (in and through the apostles) in four points:

- 1) The Comforter would guide the apostles into all truth (John 16:13).
- 2) The Comforter would bring to the apostles’ memory all that Jesus had taught them during His earthly ministry (John 14:26).
- 3) The Comforter would bear witness through the apostles and they would be the Lord’s personal first-hand eyewitnesses. In other words, inspired testimony because they had “been with” Jesus “from the beginning” (John 15:26-27).
- 4) The Comforter would show them things to come (John 16:13; 2 Thess. 2; 1 Tim. 4; 2 Tim. 4, etc).

This description of the Holy Spirit’s work (through the apostles) demonstrates that His work as the Comforter would be limited to the apostles. These points show that only the apostles were qualified to be in receipt of the Holy Spirit as the Comforter (*parakletos*). Obviously, no one today could be described as such.

*(Continued on page 5)*  
**The Comforter...**



Editorial...

## THE UNITY CHRIST DEMANDS #5

Garland M. Robinson

### WHAT NOW? GO BACK!

All men living today have been born into a world of deep religious division and confusion. It is a part of our society and culture. How can we avoid it? What should we do? The answer is to go back to the Bible. Go back before the Gospel was perverted. Go back before the truth was distorted. Go back before the doctrine of God was corrupted. Go back before the departure from The faith. Go back before unity was destroyed.

Go back. We must go back all the way to the early years of the church when it began in the first century. Following the pattern of that church, and only that church, will bring about the unity the Lord requires. This concept is denounced and disparaged today by men who have a vested interest in keeping things as they are. In other words, they will lose their power and control if people go back to the Bible and imitate the pattern of the first century church. They desire to create and maintain their own church, the way they want it. So, they tell us it's impossible to imitate the church of the first century because we're so dumb we would not know which parts to imitate — of course, we would need them to tell us! That's what they want.

People everywhere must do today what people of the first century did in order to become Christians and worship God acceptably.

They **HEARD** the word of God — the Gospel of salvation. Jesus said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, and **they shall be all taught of God**. Every man therefore that hath **heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me**" (John 6:44-45). Paul wrote, "...Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they

believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then **faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God**" (Rom. 10:13-17).

When they heard the Gospel, they **BELIEVED** it and what it taught about Jesus the Christ. "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, **believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized**" (Acts 18:8). "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must **believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him**" (Heb. 11:6). Jesus said, "...That ye shall die in your sins: for if ye **believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins**" (John 8:24). "He that **believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned**" (Mark 16:16).

Their belief (faith) moved them to **REPENT** of their sins. Jesus said, "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye **repent, ye shall all likewise perish**" (Luke 13:3,5). On the day the first Gospel sermon was preached, many ask what they needed to do. "Then Peter said unto them, **Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost**" (Acts 2:38). Another audience was told the same the thing. "**Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord**" (Acts 3:19). On Mars' Hill Paul preached that God "...commandeth all men every where to **repent**" (Acts 17:30).

Having repented, they **CONFESSED** faith in Jesus as the only begotten Son of God. Jesus said,

"Whosoever therefore shall **confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven**" (Matt. 10:32-33). The man from Ethiopia made that good confession in order to be baptized. These are his words: "**I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God**" (Acts 8:37). Paul wrote, "...if thou shalt **confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation**" (Rom. 10:9-10).

After believing, repenting and confessing, they were **BAPTIZED** in water for the forgiveness of their sins. Jesus made Faith and Baptism essential for salvation in Mark 16:16. "He that believeth and is **baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned**." Therefore, the apostles commanded the same on the day of Pentecost. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be **baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...**" (Acts 2:38). Saul of Tarsus was told: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be **baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord**" (Acts 22:16). The same thing was taught and preached in every place. In water baptism there's something we know, i.e., "...that our old man [the way we've been living in sin] is crucified with him, that [in order that] the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom. 6:6). That takes place in water baptism. A few verses later we read, "But God be thanked, that **ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness**" (Rom. 6:17-18). The form of doctrine they had obeyed was water baptism (vs.3-6). Freedom from sin, forgiveness of sin does not come "when" we Believe, nor "when" we Repent, nor "when" we Confess. Romans 6:3-6, 17-18 says it comes WHEN we are baptized in water. No wonder Peter was inspired to write, "...**baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience**

toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:21).

You won't hear these scriptures preached and expounded upon in denominational churches. They go to great lengths to circumvent them. What's even worse than that is you won't even hear it in a lot of "churches" today that have the name "church of Christ" on their sign! Shame on them and their preachers and their elders who won't preach the "whole counsel of God." Shame on their members too who sit back and never demand the words of heaven be declared. They've been lulled to sleep and content themselves with thinking they've been to church, they've done their duty, that's all they need to do. They may have a zeal of God, but it's not according to knowledge (cf. Rom. 10:2).

Obedience to the Gospel made people of the first century children of God (Gal. 3:26-27; 1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 2:41,47). Men and women today are made children of God by doing the same thing.

We must do today what was done in the first century to **WORSHIP** God faithfully. The New Testament reveals five acts of worship. These acts are included in worship on the Lord's day, every first day of the week (Acts 2:41).

- 1) **Singing** (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Singing is congregational and a capella, i.e., without the accompaniment of mechanical instruments of music. There are no choirs, solos or "special singers" in New Testament worship. No individuals are singled out and their voices magnified to "improve the singing." Such theatrics turns the focus away from worshiping God in order to worship ourselves. With them, since we like it, the idea is that God likes it too.
- 2) **Preaching/Teaching** (Acts 20:7). A message from God's Word is delivered. Nothing but the pure and unadulterated Word of God is proclaimed. The whole counsel of God is preached without fear or favor of any man (Acts 20:26-27).
- 3) **Giving** (1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:6-7). A free-will offering is collected from each member on the Lord's day. You will not find sales, fund raisers or charging admission as a part of New Testament giving.
- 4) **Lord's supper** (Acts 20:7; cf. 1 Cor. 11:23-29; Matt. 26:26-29). Each member partakes of unleav-

ened bread and fruit of the vine every first day of the week to remember Christ's suffering and death on the cross.

- 5) **Praying** (Acts 12:5; cf. Acts 2:42). Members reverently pray unto God the Father in the name of Jesus Christ the Son.

Jesus said true worship is "in spirit" (from the heart, sincere) and "in truth" (according to and directed by God's Word) (John 4:24). Does this characterize your worship? Let's return to the Lord's authorized acts of worship.

We must do today what they did in the first century to live a daily Christian life. That requires living faithful unto the Lord every single day. "...Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). "...He that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matt. 10:22). "...Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

Our day by day Christian living must be governed by the authority of the Lord (Col. 3:17). All that we do must be in accordance with the authority of the Scriptures. If we cannot point to a passage which authorizes our words or actions, then we must not do it. Unauthorized acts causes division.

### CONCLUSION

Only one way exists to have the unity God desires we have — put away our own will and submit ourselves to God's will. We must submit to and embrace wholeheartedly the doctrine of the Lord — the New Testament. It is God's standard for unity. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4:4-6).

Let us endeavor (make haste, give diligence, labor) "...to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). Not by compromise with error, but by following heaven's way of righteousness — God's plan for unity, the Holy Bible.

Are you interested and willing to do exactly what people of the first century did in order to become a Christian and live a Christian life? Love the truth.

### CONTRIBUTIONS

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[NOTE: Thanks to everyone for sending such generous contributions. It demonstrates the interest and support of faithful brethren everywhere who have not bowed the knee to liberalism and progressivism. It's a breath of fresh air to know there are so many who love the truth. My prayer for you is to continue to love the truth with all your heart, soul, strength and mind (Luke 10:27). —Editor, gmr]

# THE LORD OF HOSTS IS THE KING OF GLORY

Bill Boyd

*“When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be... we’ll sing and shout the victory.”*

The inscription above the 24th Psalm identifies it as “A Psalm of David,” but traditionally it has been understood to be A Psalm of the Son of David. There is no direct messianic reference to this psalm in the New Testament, but it is difficult to find a more fitting application than the ascension of Jesus to his throne as the Christ.

This is a psalm of a triumphant entry. The “King of Glory” is “the LORD” (Psalm 24:8-10). Why this triumphant anthem is repeated at the end of this psalm is addressed at the end of this article. Some suggest that David wrote the psalm in anticipation of the LORD coming in his glory to the temple that Solomon would build. The LORD did come in his glory to Solomon’s temple. *“When Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD’s house”* (2 Chron. 7:1-2). But if the psalm is prophetic, then it could just as easily be prophetic of the Messiah. Jesus made a “triumphant entry” into Jerusalem (Matt. 21:1-11) before his arrest and crucifixion, but it is after he rose from the dead that he received *“the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation”* (Psalm 24:5).

The Psalm opens with the majesty and glory of the LORD. *“The earth is the LORD’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein”* (Psalm 24:1). As it is written in Job 41:11, *“Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine.”* As it is written in Exodus 9:29, *“...that thou mayest know how that the earth is the LORD’s.”* As it is written in Exodus 19:9, *“All the earth is mine.”* As it is written in Deuteronomy 10:14, *“Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD’s thy God, the earth also, with*

*all that therein is.”* Thus, Paul quoted twice from this very psalm (1 Cor. 10:25,28). That the LORD *“founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods”* (Psalm 24:2), harkens back to the creation where *“the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters”* (Gen. 1:2), and where God said, *“Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so”* (Gen. 1:9). The earth is the LORD’s, because he made it.

David asked, *“Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place”* (Psalm 24:3)? This sounds like the hill of Zion upon which the temple stood, and the Holy of Holies where the Ark was to be kept. Once a year, after the acceptable sacrifices were made, the High Priest could ascend that hill and stand before the mercy seat in the most holy place. He would do so as a type of Christ, who would ascend before us to the throne of God in heaven. Compare Hebrews 6:19-20, *“Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec”* with Hebrews 9:24: *“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”* From the comparison we can clearly see that Christ is our *“forerunner...into heaven itself.”*

In Psalm 24:4 David answered his question, *“He that hath clean hands”* (innocence in actions), *“and a pure heart”* (innocence in thoughts); *“who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully”* (the innocence of a dedicated life). The one that can approach God must live an honest life from their heart to their hands. The blessings and salvation of verse 5, *“He shall receive the blessing*

*from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.”* This salvation can be taken here as the deliverance from a vain and sinful world, and the blessings he received as the blessings that were rightfully his. They were looking for such a savior in David’s day, *“This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah”* (Psalm 24:6). First Peter 1:10 says that the prophets enquired and searched diligently for such a salvation. The psalm’s reference to Jacob calls to mind how Jacob sought after God when he saw the ladder that reached to heaven, and when he fought with the angel through the night. But Jacob was not worthy to come so before the presence of God. The only man that could come before God in this manner is Jesus.

In Psalm 24:7-8 we have the first anthem of the triumphant entry. *“Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.”* As seen from earth, *“Jesus was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight”* (Acts 1:9), but from heaven he was *“received up into glory”* (1 Tim. 3:18). Jesus was *“mighty in battle”* in that he *“spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it”* (Col. 2:15), and *“for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil”* (1 John 3:8).

The triumph anthem is repeated with slight and significant variation in Psalm 24:9-10, *“Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah.”* This time the *“King of glory”* is *“the LORD of hosts.”* This time he brings a great company with him. I suggest that these are those of whom Paul wrote in 1 Thes-

salonians 4:16-17 when he said, “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 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.” In Romans 8:17-18 Paul says we will be “glorified together” with him, and “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” Peter said, “An entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:11). This makes me want to sing, “When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be...we’ll sing and shout the victory.”

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## **The Comforter...**

(Continued from page 1)

If anyone today had the Comforter as the apostles had in the first century, they would not need a New Testament — they could write one! Note also the Lord said concerning the Comforter (the Spirit of truth), “the world cannot receive” (John 14:17). Contextually, Jesus is contrasting the apostles with the world, not Christians and non-Christians, as some assume. In other words, nobody else in the world will receive what the apostles received or do what the first-century apostles did.

### **THE APOSTLES HAD UNIQUE POSITION**

The apostles sustained a unique relationship with Christ and the church. This is seen in the following points:

- 1) They would have the authority to bind and loose on earth as the Lord’s authoritative representatives as they were guided by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 16:18-19; 18:18).
- 2) They would sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Obviously these thrones are not literal but metaphorical and indicate their role to pass apostolic authoritative judgments upon the church (Matt. 19:28; 1 Cor. 2:15).
- 3) They would have the authority to remit and retain sins (John 20:21-23). This of course would be accomplished as they set out the terms of remission of sins through their inspired apostolic preaching (Acts 2:38).
- 4) The apostles, including Paul, would be “ambassadors” for Christ (2 Cor 5:20). An ambassador is a person clothed with delegated authority as a representative to a government on foreign soil. Christ ascended back to His Father and sat down at His right hand as

King of kings and Lord of lords and sent forth His apostles, His ambassadors, who became the “able ministers of the New Testament” (2 Cor. 3:6).

### **THE APOSTLES HAD UNIQUE QUALIFICATIONS**

The apostles of Christ were hand-picked by Jesus: “And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach...” (Mark 3:14). Later, when Judas Iscariot fell by transgression, even Matthias who took his place was selected by the Lord through the lot system. “And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen...and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles” (Acts 1:24-26).

In Acts 1:22-26, there are certain prerequisites and qualifications stated that one must possess to even be considered an apostle (ambassador). There were three qualifications that no one today can possess: 1) Baptized of John’s baptism (Paul being the exception — later hand-picked by Jesus when He appeared to him on the road to Damascus to qualify him to be an eyewitness (Acts 26:16). 2) Personal eyewitness of the resurrected Christ. 3) Hand-picked by the Lord. Obviously, no one today meets any of these qualifications; therefore, no one today can be in the position of the first-century apostles. There is no need for such. They are still our apostles through the New Testament they gave us (2 Cor. 3:6; Eph. 3:3-5). This further proves that the Comforter was only for the apostles.

### **THE APOSTLES HAD UNIQUE POWERS**

The apostles received their powers directly through Holy Spirit baptism.

As you know, the word baptize means to immerse, submerge, or overwhelm. Holy Spirit baptism was immersion in miraculous power. The Lord told the apostles that they would be endued (clothed) with power from on high (Luke 24:49). The outpouring of this power occurred on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ in Jerusalem — the day the church was established (Acts 2:1-11). This power came exclusively on the apostles. Jesus took the promise of John the Baptist in Matthew 3:10-12 and applied it only to the apostles in Acts 1:2-8. The term Comforter therefore in John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7 is the same thing as Holy Spirit baptism. The outpouring of this power is the fulfillment of the Lord’s promise that He made to His apostles just prior to His death, burial, and resurrection. Primary among these powers was the ability to lay hands on others in order to impart a wide range of powers — miraculous gifts (Acts 8:14-18; 9:1-6). In the absence of a written New Testament, these gifts and powers would be needed for the church to function as it should and for the Word of God to be confirmed as it was preached (Mark 16:15-20; Eph. 4:7-15).

### **CONCLUSION/SUMMARY**

The apostles received the Comforter — Holy Spirit baptism — to qualify them to be inspired witnesses, ambassadors for Christ, and able ministers of the New Testament. No one today has the Comforter as the apostles did. The written Word of God completely furnishes us today. We do not have any “revealers” of truth today. We have preachers who should be pointing people back to what these inspired men spoke and wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Preach the Word!

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# FOUR THIEVES OF THE CRUCIFIXION

Johnny O. Trail

When one reads the account of the crucifixion, it becomes evident that many wicked people conspired to murder the Son of God. All manner of criminal culpability is revealed in the Gospel accounts. Examining the thieves of the crucifixion provides insight into the events surrounding the death of Christ and our own answerability and guilt in regards to the death of Christ. For a moment, let us consider the four thieves of the crucifixion — the one who betrayed, the one who was bargained, the one who blasphemed, and the one who believed.

Judas was the thief who **betrayed** Christ with a kiss. Luke 22:47-48 says, *“And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?”* This was not just some light, quick peck on the cheek — it was an over abundant display of affection. Judas feigned a friendly, overt gesture so the temple guards would know exactly whom to arrest. His plan and his complicities in the arrest and trial of Jesus are undeniable. How cold and calculating Judas was to act like a friend all the while seeking an opportunity to turn Jesus over to the Sanhedrin!

Scripture reveals Judas for the greedy thief that he was. John 12:4-6 states, *“Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.”* It is little wonder that Judas was willing to betray the Son of God for thirty pieces of silver (Matt. 26:15). Judas was more interested in money than in the truth of God incarnate.

Barabbas was the thief who was **bargained** for release over the sinless, perfect Son of God. The Bible makes the identity of Barabbas known to the reader in startling terms. Luke records Barabbas’ crimes twice to expose the enormity of his sins. Luke 23:18-19

reveals, *“And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas: (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.)”* In a follow-up statement, Luke also reminds the reader, *“And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will”* (Luke 23:25). Barabbas’ crimes were manifold and mammoth in nature. One might observe that Barabbas was right where he deserved to be — in prison awaiting execution.

There is something profound about the release of Barabbas in light of our soul’s salvation. In reality, the thieves that were released on the occasion of Christ’s death were you and me! Christ was the propitiation or appeasement for our sins. First John 4:10 says, *“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”* Without Christ’s atoning sacrifice, we would be just as condemned as Barabbas was and just as deserving of our sentence.

There is an interesting piece of history regarding the circumstances of Barabbas’ incarceration. He was chained to other thieves when he was brought before Pilate for the purpose of bargaining. Mark 15:7 says, *“And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection.”* While it is speculative, one wonders if the two crucified with Jesus were among those chained to Barabbas. If so, it is probably safe to say that the two crucified with Christ were also “notable” criminals. Regardless of their bondage or their circumstances prior to crucifixion, they were suitable candidates for capital punishment (Luke 23:39-43).

Both of the thieves on the cross were guilty of **blasphemy** against Christ. As we will note later on, one repented and one remained unchanged. Matthew 27:42-44 says, *“He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let*

*him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.”* These criminals, along with the Jewish counsel that was assembled before the cross, said wicked things about the identity of Christ. Still, a loving Savior was willing to forgive even this (Luke 23:34).

One of the two thieves on the cross evidently repented and became a **believer**. Luke 23:39-43 states, *“And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”* While one cannot avail himself to this type of forgiveness today, one can be saved through obedience to the Gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 15:1-4; Rom. 6:1-4). This thief realized and acknowledged the true identity of the Messiah just before the end of his life. Heaven forbid any person wait until it is too late (Heb. 9:27).

In order for one to have the same type of forgiveness as the repentant thief, Jesus would have to be available in the flesh to forgive sins. Scriptures teach that Jesus will come back, not to offer additional forgiveness, but to destroy the world and usher in the judgment of God. Second Peter 3:10 says, *“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”*

Since Jesus is not in the flesh to offer atonement for sins, the “God breathed” word of God supplies our needs regarding salvation, morality, and godly living. Second Timothy 3:16-17, *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction*

*in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."*

Only one of the two men writhing in agony and pain at Calvary alongside Christ realized at last the true identity of Jesus and sought to be with the Savior in Paradise. This fact underscores something about human nature. Both men had equal access to Christ at the end of their lives, but only one

sought out the favor of Christ. One of the lessons to learn is this — all men can potentially be saved (John 3:26), but some will chose to be lost!

It is very easy to judge the thieves that had a role in the crucifixion of Christ, but the reality of the matter is that all of our sins nailed Jesus to the tree. Isaiah 53:5 says, *"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the*

*chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."*

Jesus paid an extreme price to secure the souls of lost humanity. All humankind should avail themselves to the soul cleansing blood of Christ (Acts 22:16).

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## POINTING FINGERS AT OTHERS

*Roger Campbell*

See if any of this sounds familiar: the prime minister or president blames the legislature and the legislature blames the top ruling figure in the country. The national government blames the state/provincial governments and the state/provincial governments blame the national government. The coach blames the players and the players blame the coach. The teacher blames the parents and the parents blame the teacher. The husband blames the wife and the wife blames the husband. The overseers blame the congregation and the congregation blames the overseers.

When we say "pointing fingers," we refer to placing the blame for something on someone else. If a blatant mistake occurs, some activity does not go well, or if something is left undone that should have been done, people often begin pointing fingers.

Finger-pointing is not something that is limited to one gender, one culture, one financial class of people, or those from one level of educational training. It is something that folks from all walks of life do, and it knows no geographic boundaries.

Finger-pointing has been around since the population of the earth was only two people! After Eve and Adam violated God's instructions by eating fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they began making excuses. And in this case, their excuses involved pointing fingers at someone else, as if blaming someone else for their misdeed somehow would erase the reality of their own sinful conduct.

After the transgressions took place in the Garden of Eden, God asked

Adam, *"Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat"* (Gen. 3:11)? What was Adam's response? *"The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat"* (3:12). Adam admitted that he ate the fruit, but, at least in part, he was pointing a finger at someone else. He pointed a finger at Eve, saying she gave him the fruit. And, his words also had "the ring" of blaming God for giving him the women who gave him the fruit.

Well, what about Eve? She, too, did some finger-pointing. When Jehovah asked her, *"What is this that thou hast done"* (3:13), she admitted that she had, in fact, eaten the fruit, but her complete statement was, *"The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat"* (3:13). Instead of taking full responsibility for her failure, she pointed a finger at the serpent.

In the next book of the Bible, we again read of a person who sinned against God, but rather than "man up" and show remorse for his evil-doing, he tried to place the blame on someone else. We are talking about Aaron, the first high priest of Israel and older brother of Moses. What sin did Aaron commit? He led the Israelites in building and worshipping a golden calf. Moses' question to his elder brother was, *"What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them"* (Exodus 32:21). Aaron's wimpy, finger-pointing answer was, *"Thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us.... And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them*

*break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf"* (Exodus 32:22-24). At whom did Aaron point a finger? At "the people." Aaron gave a cowardly, nonsensical, blame-others response. God's people deserve better leadership than that!

In contrast to the finger-pointers in the world, when King David messed up by committing adultery and other evil deeds, rather than blame someone else, he "told it like it was." With no stipulations or attempt to minimize his guilt, David declared, *"I have sinned against the LORD"* (2 Samuel 12:13). His sin was ugly, but his spirit of repentance and taking responsibility for his grievous error was beautiful.

The Bible says, *"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God"* (Rom. 14:12). It also is written that the God of judgment *"will render to every man according to his deeds"* (Rom. 2:6). When we stand before the judgment seat of the risen Son of God, pointing a finger at others will not remove the guilt of any transgressions we have committed.

If a sin was committed, but we had no involvement in it, we are not responsible for it. On the other hand, if we broke God's law or failed in some manner when others were counting on us, let us be mature enough to admit our fault, take responsibility for our action, and strive to do better in the future.

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## SEEK THE OLD PATHS

Robert Wayne (Bob) Heflin passed away Nov. 22, 2019. He was a long time supporter of *Seek The Old Paths* for many years. He is survived by his wife of 65 years, Hazel and their 16 children. He is survived by 46 grandchildren and 33 great grandchildren as well as many extended

family members and friends. Brother Heflin was a good friend. The last time I talked to him he told me he would always support STOP. He did exactly that. The Scriptures give us every hope of meeting again. He lived in Vichy, Missouri.  
...**Editor, Garland M. Robinson.**

“Add us to your mailing list. Thank you” ...**Mason and Kourtney Free, West Monroe, LA.** “Thank you” ...**Isaac & Mallory Mercer, Mangham, LA.** “Thank you” ...**Jeremy & Jada Smith, Mangham, LA.** “Thank you” ...**Bobby & Becky Free, Rayville, LA.** “Keep on keeping on. Love your paper. I’m in a small church. We hold fast to the word” ...**Stout, OH.** “I would like to start receiving *Seek The Old Paths*. Thank you” ...**Mrs. Shirley M. Blair, Chicago, IL.** “Please remove me from your STOP mailing list. I no longer live at this address. Thank you” ...**Jesus Perez, Anaheim, CA.** “Thanks for a great sound Christian paper. God bless you and all your good work” ...**M/M H. L. Bradshaw, Camden, AR.** “Please stop our paper. Thank you” ...**Walter & Pat Voce, Columbia, TN.** “I love your *Seek The Old Paths*, but I’m going blind and can hardly read them anymore so please discontinue service. Many, many thanks for them all. They are really good. I am 85” ...**Cedar Hill, TX.** “I like reading STOP. Please send me another copy so I can give it to a friend of mine. I want more” ...**Earline Boyd, Chicago, IL.** “We receive *Seek The Old Paths* because our brother in Christ sent you our name. Thank you so much for this publication. We are sending you a list of names of our loved ones who would profit from reading this. Thank you so much” ...**Donny & Karen Spradling, Ceres, CA.** “My husband and I enjoy your publication, *Seek The Old Paths*. We would like to share it with men in our small church. Would it be possible for you to send us 15 copies? Enclosed is a donation so you can keep the paper going. Keep up the good work” ...**Don & Sharon Smith, Indianapolis, IN.** [NOTE from the editor, We are happy to send bundles to individuals and congregations. However, the postage is much cheaper if we mail in multiples of 10, such as 10, 20, 30, etc. We are sending you 20. Feel free to pass them out to as many as you like.] “Your November 2019 issue is excellent. Continue to send them. Thank you so much” ...**Donna Ames, Newcomerstown, OH.** “Please accept this small donation to *Seek The Old Paths* in memory of James Berry of Montgomery, AL who passed away November, 7, 2019. He was a faithful Christian who brought many to repentance and spread the Gospel daily. He will be missed” ...**Timothy & Kristy Hatch, Montgomery, AL.** “Thanks. Enjoy your paper” ...**Lennie Ham, Union, SC.** “Enjoy your publication very much. I would love to have a package of 10. Thanks so much” ...**Bill Anderson, Oxford, MS.** “John Hall has passed away” ...**Mountain City, TN.** “John Crowley has passed away” ...**South Hill, VA.** “Return to sender” ...**Mary Stephens, Tompkinsville, KY.** “Refused” ...**Floyd McCathern, Yukon, OK.** “Thanks for your work with this publication” ...**Old Hope C/C, Thompson Station, TN.** “Thankful for men that will preach the truth, that there is a heaven and hell, not just a good feel good story” ...**Charlie & Ruth Rector, Dayton, TN.** “I would like to be added to receive the Old Paths. Thank you” ...**Terry Roelfsema, Ranchester, WY.** “Thank you” ...**Joshua & Molly McDonald, Mt. Hope, KS.** “Thank you” ...**Jack Piper, Clemmons, NC.** “Thank you so much. God bless” ...**Tommy Muirhead, Flora, MS.** “*Seek*

*The Old Paths* is a scriptural paper. I appreciate it so much. Thank you” ...**Wilma C. Prater, Clarksville, TN.** “We enjoy your publication” ...**Edwin & Georgia Garner, Centerville, TN.** “Thank you” ...**Mary Lou Parker, Red Oak, TX.** “We have thoroughly enjoyed STOP this year. The sound biblical articles are to be commended! Thank you” ...**Maurice Brown, Broadway C/C, Rockford, IL.** “I have access to your publication online and will not need any future mailings” ...**Jeffrey Wilson, Verona, MS.** “The *Seek The Old Paths* is a great publication. I appreciate your dedication to preach the word. Thank you” ...**Mrs. Louis Thomas, Mabank, TX.** “Please accept the enclosed as a token of appreciation for *Seek The Old Paths*. It continues to be an excellent publication that is sorely needed in the brotherhood today. Many precious souls have forsaken the truth, ‘having loved this present world.’ In an increasing number of congregations the candlestick has dimmed, while in others possibly been removed. We continue to see a number of formerly faithful churches transform into bodies similar to ‘Community Churches.’ But while we lament those departures from the faith, we know of several who have not ‘bowed the knee to Baal.’ Although obstacles abound, the work of faithful brethren in Africa, Costa Rica, India and other mission points continue to bear fruit. Nearer home, congregations like Leoni remain ‘set for the defense of the Gospel.’ As you serve under the elders there, no doubt your work is exemplary; not unlike your efforts as editor of *Seek The Old Paths*” ...**James E. Stewart, Nashville, TN.** “Keep up the good work. Thanks” ...**James A. Taber, Summerville, SC.**

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