



Seek The Old Paths

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

Vol. 31, No. 7

July 2020

THE SHORT SPAN OF MAN'S EXISTENCE ON EARTH (THE ULTIMATE PERSPECTIVE)

Jon Gary Williams

The idea of an extremely old earth simply has no scientific foundation. The fact is, there is scientific evidence that the earth is relatively young, in thousands, not millions or billions of years.

For children of God, there are many great events to ponder. Of these events there is one of special significance, not only because of its magnitude but also because it occurred *not very long ago*. Though this event is continuously evident, yet the fact that it was *not that far* in the past is often overlooked and with many may even fall out of view. And, it is not that this (it) is done intentionally, rather, many have been slowly conditioned to allow it to slip into a foggy distance. What is this event? What it is may surprise and even alarm some.

In your mind's eye, think back in time, back to the very beginning to creation itself, and grasp this truth — the fact that creation was *not that long ago*. Lock onto this thought. Looking back into the *not too distant* past, the earth, on which we live did not exist.

Not long ago there was no universe — no sun, no moon, no stars, no galaxies and, furthermore, no space. Looking back just a few thousand years, nothing of a material nature existed and no place for it to exist. Hence, the sobering truth — the world on which we live has not been around very long.

It was just a short time ago that

God brought everything to be by fiat creation. He spoke and it was done. *“And God said...and God said...and God said....”* This was the beginning of time and counting time by the earth's rotation of each day.

Genesis 1:1, *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”* This was the origin of space and the earth, both of which occurred on the first day of creation. Then three days later the sun, moon and stars were created. Keep in mind that all this took place just a few thousand years ago.

Although Christians should understand this, the fact is, many have been strangely, even subconsciously, conditioned to view the earth having existed for an extraordinarily long time. The concept of an ancient earth is so pervasive in our culture it is hard to escape. It so permeates the media and our education system, our children are constantly exposed to it. Thus, it is no wonder that some have been subtly influenced to see a world that is somewhat ancient.

Some have reasoned, *“Look at the world, it just looks old.”* Yes, it may look old, but not billions or even millions of years old. Others have said: *“Science tells us the earth must be*

several billion years old.” Does it? The answer is No. Such a claim is only “guesswork” and “wishful thinking.” Most are not aware that advocates of an old earth view disagree widely on the earth's age. The truth is, the idea of an extremely old earth simply has no scientific foundation.

What many do not realize is that the fundamental reason people promote this view is because they have accepted the theory of evolution. Evolution, of course, requires eons of time and evolutionists know that without multiplied millions of years, evolution could never have happened. So, for them, an extremely old earth is essential.

There is another factor that tends to influence people to assume the earth is old — the vastness of space. Some have said: *“Just look at the size of the universe. It must have taken millions of years for star light to travel to the earth. This shows the earth has been around for a long time.”* However, this is flawed reasoning. Light from the stars did not travel to earth. Rather, God set this light in place. Hence, star light, created on day four (Gen. 1:14-19), was immedi-

(Continued on page 54)

The Short Span...



Editorial...

GOD'S DIVINE POWER #1

Garland M. Robinson

2 Peter 1:3, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue."

It is by God's divine power that His "all inspired Word" has been given, which in turn gives us the teaching and instruction we need to not only know the Christian graces (2 Peter 1:5-11), but how to attain them and live by God's holy revealed will.

The word "**divine**" means "god-like...divinity, divine, godhead." Thayer says it was used by "the Greeks to denote the divine nature...without reference to any individual deity" (p.285). Arndt & Gingrich says: "of the godhead and everything that belongs to it, ...of that which exceeds the bounds of human or earthly possibility, *supernatural*" (p.354). According to Wuest, "Paul uses it in Acts 17:29 and Romans 1:20, and in both places he uses it to speak of the attributes of God, or of God seen from the standpoint of his attributes. In view of 2 Peter 1:3, Peter uses it to describe the power of God, *dunamis*, 'that which overcomes resistance, inherent power, power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature' (Vol. II, p.19).

The Greek word translated divine is used three times in the New Testament. In Acts 17:29 it is translated *godhead* where it is applied to God's deity (divinity) and is put in contrast to the false gods of man's imagination (which are no gods at all). There is nothing divine about them. The other two times is found in 2 Peter 1:3-4. It is translated *divine* where it is used in connection with God's *divine power* and God's *divine nature*. It emphasizes the God of all creation as the only living and true God (1 Thess. 1:9). It emphasizes His supernatural power and underscores His eternal attributes, His characteristics, His nature.

Companion Greek words are found in Romans 1:20 where the Holy Spirit speaks of God's "*eternal power and godhead*." Colossians 2:9 reveals that

in Christ "*dwelleth all the fulness of the **godhead** bodily.*"

God's divine "**power**" (2 Peter 1:3) is the word *dunamis*. It is found 120 times in the Greek New Testament and is translated by several different words: power (77 times), mighty work, strength, miracle, might, virtue, mighty, wonderful work, ability, worker of miracles, meaning, mighty deed, mightily, violence, abundance. It is the word we often mention from Romans 1:16 where Paul said, "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the **power** of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*" Power is the word from which we derive our English word "dynamite." God's word is dynamite, powerful, not in the sense of the destruction that results from an explosion, but in the sense of its energy, force, potency, strength, commanding, influential.

FALSE AND TRUE "DIVINE"

The English word *divine* is used often throughout the Old Testament in reference to witchcraft and sorcery which includes the false gods of the heathen and all that oppose Jehovah. In speaking of false prophets and hirelings we read, "*The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof **divine** for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, Is not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us*" (Micah 3:11). Ezekiel 3:6-9 speaks of false prophets whose words are "*...**vanity and lying divination**, saying, The LORD saith: and the LORD hath not sent them: ... Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a **lying divination**, whereas ye say, The LORD saith it; albeit I (God, gmr) have not spoken? Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord GOD. And mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that **divine lies**: they shall not be*

in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel..." (Ezek. 13:9,23; 21:29).

The Lord God Jehovah is the true divine. All that oppose him will come to naught along with their deeds. God made plain to Israel when they entered the land of Canaan that all that used or claimed divine powers were to be destroyed. "*When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth **divination**, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God. For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto **diviners**: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so to do*" (Deut. 18:9-14).

King Saul had attempted to obey God according to the instructions in Deuteronomy 18 for we read, "*And Saul had put away those that had **familiar spirits**, and the **wizards**, out of the land*" (1 Sam. 28:3). Yet, when facing a battle with the Philistines, it is recorded: "*Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a **familiar spirit**, that I may go to her; and inquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a **familiar spirit** at Endor. And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray thee, **divine** unto me by the **familiar spirit**, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee. And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have **familiar spirits**, and the **wizards**, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die*" (1 Sam. 28:7-9)?

Jehovah is the only true and living God — He and He alone is divine. God declared through Isaiah: "*I am the LORD, and **there is none else**,*

there is no God beside me...” (45:5). The Psalmist said, “*My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God... My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God*” (Psalm 42:2; 84:2). “*But the LORD is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation*” (Jer. 10:10). “*He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he*” (Deut. 32:4). “*As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him*” (Psalm 18:30).

The apostle John records a scene he witnessed which speaks of God’s divinity in Revelation 15:3-4: “*And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.*”

It is the true God who made all living things. “*Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture*” (Psalm 100:3). “*God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good*” (Num. 23:19; cf. 1 Sam. 15:29)?

Part 1 of 3

Harry Lee Barnes 1947-2020

Husband, father, grandfather, brother, farmer, servant of the Lord, passed from this life unexpectedly (6/21). He was a faithful deacon, working tirelessly in missions and Bible classes with the young people (35 years in Bible Bowl). He leaves behind his good wife Janet, three daughters and sons-in-laws and eight grandchildren. A great void is left in this good family and the church at Leoni (home of STOP).



Elder's COLUMN

THE SIN OF DIVISION!

There can be no more serious matter than that of dividing the body of Christ. It is “an abomination” — detestable, disgusting and loathing — in the sight of God!

The sweet psalmist of Israel wrote: “*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity*” (Psalm 133:1). On the other hand, there is absolutely nothing and I mean nothing, more heart wrenching than division in the body of Christ! The very thought of dividing the precious body of Christ tightens the stomach muscles, a lump forms in the throat, knees almost buckle and a big “Oh no!” quickly races through our thoughts! As Nathan told David, “*Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme*” (2 Sam. 12:14). Of course, the “deed” is not the same, but the principle has great application to the consequences of dividing the body of Christ!

The one behind all division is Satan! “*Be sober, be vigilant: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*” (1 Peter 5:8). One of the devices of Satan is dividing the body of Christ. We must always remember, Satan is never asleep nor takes a day off. He is constantly at work through his arsenal of “*the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*” (1 John 2:16).

The servant of old wrote, “*These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood. An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren*” (Prov. 6:16-19).

Concerning division and its consequences, Jesus said, “*Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand*” (Matt. 12:25).

Brethren need to greatly heed the inspired warning from Paul, “*And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another; even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you*” (Gal. 4:30-32). “*But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then. Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh*” (Gal. 5:15-16).

Division in the body (church) of Christ hampers our efforts to evangelize the world. Division creates doubt and promotes allegiances to men and not Christ. Division promotes the “lust of the flesh.” Division is the exaltation of pride. Division sets aside love. Division unleashes the deadly tongue.

Friends, there can be no more serious matter than that of dividing the body of Christ. It is “an abomination” — detestable, disgusting and loathing — in the sight of God! Whenever a split occurs the consequences continue to live well beyond the life-span of the disputants! Think about that!

Ivive Powell
P.O. Box 92
West Plains, MO 65775

THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE #2

James W. Boyd

Each of us has the choice to either accept the Bible as the authority in religion, or ignore it and follow whatever we choose. But we must bear the consequences of our choice. While the Bible is discarded by many, it remains the verbally inspired, infallible, inerrant, all-sufficient, and authoritative Word of God. Therefore, in ALL matters pertaining to our service to God we must ask, "What does the Bible teach?" We must respect the authority of God as given in His Word.

In our lesson last month (June 2020) we learned that the nature of this authority is that it is SUPREME, ALL-SUFFICIENT, and UNIVERSAL in application to all people, everywhere, in every generation. We today live under the authority of Jesus Christ, God's Son, and His authority shall continue until He comes again.

SAME FOR ALL

There is UNITY involved in His authority. By this we mean that the same authority is behind everything He ever said or did. There is as much authority behind one command as another. To be sure, there are some things the Bible teaches that are more crucial than others as far as the immediate consequences are concerned. But disobedience to the will of God, as it applies to us, is sinful, and it is just as sinful to disobey one command as it is to disobey another. No man, or group of men, have the right to declare anything that God has revealed, directed, commanded, and instructed to be non-essential and unimportant. Man only shows his arrogance and depravity in pride when he attempts to stand in judgment of God's commands and rank them according to importance as to which ought to be obeyed and which can be ignored.

James 2:10-11, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of **all**. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law." James is not saying that a murderer is also an adulterer. He is saying

that when either evil deed is done, the law of God is violated and the guilty stands condemned. This is because the authority that forbids one, forbids both.

Many religious people bemoan the decrease of disrespect for the moral teaching of the Lord. They will try to persuade others to do, or not to do, certain things because the Bible so teaches. But what they do not realize is how they have already undermined respect for the Bible by contending that some of God's commands are important, but others can be ignored. There is just as much authority behind the command to be *baptized* as there is behind the prohibition of *adultery*. There is the same authority behind *repentance* as there is not to *steal*. The teaching on the *Lord's Supper* is from the same source as the command not to *murder*. When you have taught and believed, as most of the religious world does, that you do not have to obey God in baptism, repentance, and the Lord's Supper, you can hardly expect people to regard the moral teaching of the Bible to carry much weight. But the same God, same Christ, same Holy Spirit is behind the entire teaching of the Bible. People who respect Deity will respect what Deity has taught, and will cease their "pick and choose" type of religion.

LEARN FROM FALSE TEACHERS?

I get very aggravated to hear some of my brethren talk about how much we can learn from the denominations. One of the reasons the church is suffering from digression and apostasy today is because too many have learned too much from the denominations already, and not enough from the Bible. Some have imitated their *methods* until they now imitate their *message*. We need to understand that the same methods that might promote error are not necessarily what is successful or acceptable in promoting truth. Some have learned so much from denominations that whenever false doctrines are taught, then exposed, we hear the wail, "that's just your interpretation." That is the denominational dodge of truth that some of my brethren have

adopted in recent years. We could set anything aside that we do not want on that basis.

One may interpret and another misinterpret. To interpret means to get the meaning God has given. God has not given a confused and divided message. He is not the author of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33). When two people interpret the Bible, they will be together and united. When they are divided, it is because one, possibly both, misinterpret. Why should brethren want to follow the denominations when denominations are constantly dodging the truth with one sort of dodge after another?

THE REAL PROBLEM

Our problem is not so much the problem of interpretation anyway. It is the problem of the will to abide by what God has taught. We ought to be like Daniel when he was commanded to eat certain foods that he could not lawfully eat as a Jew. He knew the law of God. That was not the problem. The question before him was whether he would obey the law of God or not. That is all he had to decide. This is the way of most of us in the church. We know the truth, but how many prefer to "learn from the denominations" and think of some way they can get around God's Word? But the authority of Christ abides through it all, one part, as well as all parts.

TIMELESS

The authority of the Bible is TIMELESS. Christ said He would be with His disciples always (Matt. 28:20). His authority did not end when He ascended into heaven. We shall be judged by His Word (John 12:48). We hear people talk about the need to update, modernize, and streamline the Christian faith so it will be relevant and applicable to today's man. Some denounce the faith of Christ as useful only to the first century. They say the world has now become more mature and needs something more mature, and so they clamor for change. If the world has become more mature, then we would be better served to return to infancy again. What people really

want is a religion that let's them do their own thing without restriction.

The doctrine of Christ is just what all people need, now and forever. The trouble is that too few are willing to listen and learn. Even some of my twisted brethren have suggested that we are answering questions nobody is asking. However, we are answering questions that everybody ought to be asking! We shall not change the answers to fit the questions. Men need to change their questions if the truth appears irrelevant to them. What the Lord taught in AD 33 is applicable now, and it shall be until He returns. The Gospel that saved our parents will save our grandchildren. The Gospel does not change according to the whims, trends, fancies, and drifts of men.

People need to learn that running from the truth does not change it. Rebellion against it does not alter it in the least. Substitutions and disobedience does not invalidate one thing. Do you know why so many of the so-called modern speech translations are finding such a market today? It is not because they are superior translations. It is not because they teach truth, or are more easily understood. It is because the "truth" is changed in instance after instance to accommodate what men already believe, or what some modernist or doctor of denomination wants the Bible to say. Men have rewritten the Bible to suit themselves and pawned it off as the Scriptures. Some of my own brethren have no more respect for the truth of God than to uphold such perversions as reliable Bibles. We do not need another Bible. We need to learn and follow the Bible we have. We have no objection to updated translations, provided they are translations. But we are offended and stand opposed to these products of merchandise called Bibles that distort and pervert the Scriptures. The Word of the Lord endures and will do so forever, but not because some of my "scholarly" brethren help it to be that way. They have joined the Devil's service to present a new book, with a different message, that, when followed, will produce a different people than the people God wants. The Biblical authority is timeless and we should respect it as that.

2720 S Chancery St.
McMinnville, TN 37110

WORSHIP PLEASING TO GOD

Denver Thomas

That reverence and sanctity that once characterized worship services in days gone by seems to have come and gone. Just a generation or so ago, people came to worship services prepared to serve the Lord in Spirit and in Truth. They knew the hour set aside for meeting and were present on time. They assembled quietly and were ready to worship. They knew and followed the book.

Today it seems many come to entertain and to be entertained. I heard one preacher say from the pulpit "We are here to entertain God." Many people do not seem to know the need to arrive on time. Many come at the last minute and want to "visit a while." Starting time seems unimportant to them. Others come and chat about any number of topics, none of which have to do with worship or spiritual matters. One is left to wonder just what has happened to people today.

Jesus, in His encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well, said "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him." That hour is the "here and now" and that saying applies to His followers this day. This saying encompasses two distinct parts. The first is "in spirit" and involves our attitude and our commitment in His service. If our heart is not in the proper "frame-of-mind," then we will not be able to worship in "spirit" as we are instructed. Paul spoke to this when he wrote: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (1 Cor. 11:26-30).

And then there is the "in truth" which relates to how well worship fol-

lows the acceptable pattern. We have been incorporating five items in worship from early days and have scriptures for what we do. We *sing* (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), we *Pray* (Acts 1:14,24; James 5:16; 1 Peter 3:12; Jude 1:20), we *Study* (2 Tim. 2:15; Heb. 5:12-13; 1 Peter 2:2); we *Commune* (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-30) and we *Give* (1 Cor. 16:1-2, 2 Cor. 9:7).

But, then there are those within the brotherhood who find "the book" insufficient for their needs, so they commence to add items. Sermons quite often contain material for which there is no Bible for support. All too often, instruments are added to singing. Choirs are assembled in place of congregational singing. And of late, women are being used in leadership roles in worship. And, not to be overlooked is the entertainment issue which has become all too commonplace, especially in larger congregations. Frivolity has become an all too frequent part of many lessons and sermons. People like being entertained and there are those who are more than willing to oblige.

From the very beginning there have been those who thought there was a better way. Jeremiah spoke to this in Jeremiah 10:23 when he wrote "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." The writer of Proverbs said, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12).

God has always demanded that His people follow that which He has instructed. Jesus gave us two warnings that many seem to totally ignore. In Matthew 7:21 Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." And in John 12:48 He said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

Are we listening?

PO Box 821
Milton, WV 25541

The Short Span...

(Continued from page 49)

ately visible on earth and could be seen by Adam and Eve two days later when they were created.

All attempts to support an extremely old earth have failed miserably. The fact is, there is scientific evidence that the earth is relatively young, in thousands and not millions of years. Here are just a few examples.

Human population. Considering the ratio at which human population doubles and extrapolating this into the past, we arrive at a beginning point of about 2,500 B.C. Amazingly, this is approximately the time of the flood when the human race began to repopulate. However, extending this ratio into the past for several million years, when evolution presumes humans first appeared, there would be enough people to fill literally thousands of earths. This alone throws the old earth concept into a tailspin.

Shrinkage of the sun. At a measurable decreasing rate, the Sun is gradually burning up. At the present rate it is calculated that no more than 100,000 years ago it would have been near double its present volume. At that volume the Sun would have been far too large and hot for life to exist on earth.

Helium in the atmosphere. This gas is the product of disintegrating minerals that, at a measurable rate, accumulates in the upper atmosphere and cannot escape earth's gravity. However, based on the known accumulative rate, if the earth is as old as evolutionists say it is, there should be gigantic amounts of helium in the upper atmosphere. Yet, the amount now present shows an estimated age for the earth to be no more than about 10,000 years.

To further show the pervasiveness of an old earth concept, even some who claim to believe the Bible have accepted it. But how can this view be reconciled with the Biblical creation of six days? It is argued, "Genesis 1:1 is not a part of the first day, because day one began at verse two. Hence, verse one could include millions or even billions of years." However, Moses exposes such a notion. Exodus 20:11 clearly places the creation of heaven and earth within the framework of the six days. "For in six days the Lord

made heaven and earth and all that in them is." Believing the earth is extremely old means one must reject Moses' inspired statement.

Of course, those who accept Biblical inspiration believe God created everything in six days. But do we really appreciate the fact that the creation week is as near to us as it is — in terms of only a few thousand years?

As we gaze back in time, it should remain fresh on our minds that the creation of our world was relatively recent and the existence of the human race is indeed brief. By capturing material existence in these terms helps to see things from God's perspective.

But now, let's shift our thinking and look at the other direction, into the future. When we do, we see a similar basic fallacy, the idea that the earth has an almost indefinite future. Atheists, of course, must believe this, they have no other choice. And, there are even religious groups that promote the idea that the earth will somehow exist forever.

Though Christians should understand that the earth will someday be no more, we must realize how easily one might fall under the influence of an old earth philosophy. Some carelessly lose sight of the truth that the world's end may not be far away and think to themselves: "Oh, the end of the earth is probably not that near."

Like those so long ago who asked, "Where is the promise of his coming?" (2 Peter 3:4) they seldom find themselves giving serious attention to the Lord's second coming and the world's eventual demise.

The fact is, just as swiftly as the earth appeared it will, without notice, suddenly disappear. Just one slight touch of the finger of God and it will be over. God put it this way, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump" (1 Cor. 15:52).

How near is the end? We don't know. But we do know that today it is one day closer than it was yesterday.

The universe is like a gigantic alarm clock that has been wound up and is slowly winding down. At a point, possibly not far away, the alarm will go off. The universe and all within it will be dissolved and swept away. Our earthly time, which is but a brief parenthesis in eternity, will be no more.

So, it is extremely important that we put all this into proper perspective, that we see how near we really are to

the beginning and how near we may be to the end.

We should back away and see the larger picture. Looking back, there is no "endless earthly time" behind us and looking forward there is no "endless earthly time" ahead of us.

Essential it is that we keep our very brief existence in perspective.

jongaryw@aol.com

Website — jongarywilliams.com

CONTRIBUTIONS

Anonymous	\$50
Anonymous	\$300
Allan Tate	\$200
John E. Smith.....	\$40
Iva Jean Buck.....	\$40
Broadway C/C, Rockford, IL.....	\$50
Anonymous	\$500
Del Brantley	\$50
Arlington C/C, McMinnville, TN	\$50
Anonymous	\$25
Robert & Beverly Pitts (in memory of Harry Lee Barnes)	\$40
Christine Bouldin (in memory of Harry Lee Barnes)	\$25
Jack Openshaw	\$25
Anonymous	\$25
Anonymous	\$100
Jean Ware	\$25
Anonymous	\$50
Anonymous	\$60
Anonymous	\$50
Lillian Eason	\$100
Anonymous	\$25
Baker C/C, Baker, FL.....	\$25
Anonymous	\$100
Midway C/C, Murfreesboro, TN	\$100
John Dial.....	\$100
Felicia McLellan.....	\$200
Smyrna C/C, Cookeville, TN.....	\$50
Neelys Bend C/C, Madison, TN	\$125
Del Brantley	\$50
Arlington C/C, McMinnville, TN	\$50
Charles Wilson	\$20
Elvin Barger	\$100
Beginning Balance.....	\$12,961.39
Contributions	\$2,750.00
Debits	
Postage.....	\$1,788.12
Supplies	\$743.06
Repairs.....	\$201.14
Ending Balance.....	\$12,979.07

RELIGIOUS DREAMERS

Marvin L. Weir

Those of denominational persuasion surely qualify as religious dreamers. They dream their man-made churches and human creeds will please the Lord. They dream that one church is as good as another, and that man, with God's approval, can attend the church of his choice. They dream they can vote to change or ignore doctrinal matters already "*settled in heaven*" (Psa. 119:89). They dream they can ignore part of God's plan of salvation (baptism for remission of sins) and still be saved. These dreamers dream that sodomites, lesbians, and the transgender crowd are not condemned as sinners. Most denominational folks dream that if one has been saved, he can never sin so as to be lost.

The Bible vividly depicts God's attitude toward the dreamer whose dreams are in opposition to His will. Jeremiah, a spokesman from God, incurred the wrath of the dreamers of his day. God said to Jeremiah: "*I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart; Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal. The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that steal my words every one from his neighbour. Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD*" (Jer. 23:25-32).

One quickly learns that God is not impressed just because someone

has a dream. We have many in the Lord's church today who are like those of Jeremiah's day — seeking to impress people with their dreams.

- 1) They dream about changing and restructuring the Lord's church.
- 2) They dream that all the Scriptures are not inspired.
- 3) They dream that many of God's miracles are simply myths.
- 4) They dream of uniting with the denominations for the betterment of Christianity!
- 5) They dream of receiving God's grace without having to comply with His laws.
- 6) They dream that the Lord's church must change to comply with an ever-changing society.
- 7) They dream that the Bible is only a love letter — much like a letter a fellow might write to his girlfriend!
- 8) They dream of using a "chorus" instead of congregational singing. And, they dream of instruments of music to accompany the chorus!
- 9) They dream of dividing the Lord's Day assembly by providing "cell groups" in certain homes on Sunday evening. This dream is rooted in their dream that because they have "**assembled together**" on Sunday morning that they are not required to assemble together when meeting on Sunday evening. Their dream has revealed, however, that the building must be open and available to all the "mossbacks," "nitpickers," and "fanatics" who insist on assembling together as the Scriptures authorize (1 Cor. 11:20,33; Acts 20:7).
- 10) These dreamers dream of women having a leadership role in the church.

Like those of Jeremiah's day, the dreamers scream, "*I have dreamed, I have dreamed*" (Jer. 23:25) as if their dreaming constitutes Bible authority. Many don't even believe in Bible authority.

Brethren, man's dreams may be exciting and interesting, but they are **destitute** of authority! Members of the body of Christ would be much better off if preachers and elders gave

less attention to their dreams and more attention to the Word of God! Fearlessly and unashamedly proclaiming the precious Gospel (Rom. 1:16) will save souls while broadcasting mere dreams will cause countless souls to forget the true and living God (cf. Jer. 23:27).

People will never profit by listening to the message of religious dreamers. The religious charlatans today, both within and without the church, devise their own message to attract folks and make them "feel good." But God is "*against them that prophesy lying dreams*" and those who cause his people "*to err by their lies*" (Jer. 23:32).

One who is a member of the Lord's church should be able to recognize one who has the Word of God (cf. Jer. 23:28). One reason a Christian has been commanded to study is so he will know the difference between truth and error (2 Tim. 2:15). One interested in his soul will "*prove the spirits [dreamers], whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world*" (1 John 4:1). There is a tremendous difference between man's dreams and theories and God's precious truth. It is folly and utter foolishness for one to follow a worldly dreamer into eternal torment. But many have no desire to "*endure sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers (dreamers, MLW) after their own lusts*" (2 Tim. 4:3).

May there be an ever-growing number of saints who will gladly step forward and "*stand in the gap*" for God (Ezek. 22:30). "God searched among His people for one person in authority who would stand the gap so that the enemy wouldn't penetrate the wall and invade the city, but He found none" (*Bible Exposition Commentary, O.T.*). Thus, far too many today have only **dreamed** about standing in the gap, and we have already observed that a dreamer's dream is worthless!

May we see the urgent need to stand firm for the cause of Christ, and to speak boldly by His authority and against all religious dreamers!

484 CR 44700
Blossom, TX 75416

WHAT PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE OBEY THE GOSPEL?

Ronald D. Gilbert

“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41). What a glorious day in Acts 2 when the Lord’s church became a reality. It was no longer the church in promise, but it was now the church realized.

Have you ever considered how many people were present on that Pentecost day? This was one of the annual Jewish feasts the Jews were required to attend each year. Josephus (noted Jewish historian) said there were over one million Jews living around the Jerusalem area. Then consider that many Jews did not live in Jerusalem but all over the world. To say that one million Jews were present on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, I believe would be a conservative number. If there were one million present, let’s consider who obeyed the Gospel that day (about 3,000) and who did not obey the Gospel that day (997,000)!

What was the percentage of those who obeyed? If one million were present: 10% is 100,000, 5% is 50,000, 1% is 10,000. So then, if one million were present and if one half of one percent (0.005) had obeyed the Gospel, there would have been 5,000 baptisms that day. But, only about 3,000 obeyed; i.e. only 3/10 of 1% (0.003) obeyed the Gospel. That means that 997,000 rejected the Gospel and were not baptized.

I hear some brethren today say they wish they had lived back in the first century where people were so receptive to the Gospel. To many, it seems to be an excuse to just say, “no one is interested in the Gospel any more.” They say we just don’t have meetings today where 3,000 or even 300 obey the Gospel.

Unlike our meetings and preaching opportunities today, everyone on the day of Pentecost needed to obey the Gospel. Preachers, have you ever preached to a crowd of at least 100 people where all 100 were lost and needed to obey the Gospel?

I don’t know about you but I have preached and attended Gospel meetings where there were 100 present and 10 obeyed the Gospel. That is a higher percentage than on the day of Pentecost by a long shot. And, in that meeting where 100 were present, 80 or more of them were already Christians, so the most that could have been baptized would have been 20; and, if 10 of the 20 were baptized, that would be 50 percent of the lost at that meeting who obeyed the Gospel. If 50 percent of one million on the day of Pentecost had obeyed the Gospel that would have been 500,000 baptisms on that day!

I remember working over 25 years with the Bible camp at Fall Creek Falls near Pikeville, TN. We would have about 125-140 teens present for one week of classes and preaching. Some years as many as 30-50 would obey the Gospel of Christ during the one week stay at Bible camp. That’s 25-40 percent of those present, but again, many of them were already Christians before camp started so it could have been 75 percent or higher of those not Christians who obeyed the Gospel.

On a mission trip to Africa a few years back we conducted three Gospel meetings and preached to a combined audience of 3,500. There were 84 baptisms and 388 restored. That is a total of 472 responses. From 3,500, 10% would have been 350 responses so that means there were around 13% who responded. But again, how many were already Christians before the meetings began? If there were only 600 who

needed to respond, then 78% responded. Think back to Pentecost, if one million were present, then only 3/10 of 1% (0.003) obeyed the Gospel that day.

Brethren, the Gospel of Christ still has the power to save (Rom. 1:16). There is still much work to do at home and around the world. If we want to reach more people with the Gospel of Christ we must preach to more people! Whether it be thousands, hundreds, ten or even one at a time, we must keep on preaching the Gospel. Let us not grow weary in well doing (Gal. 6:9). Only a percentage of those who hear the Gospel will obey it.

The day of Gospel meetings is not over! We are doing pretty good when we have 5 non-Christians at our meetings and we baptize one of them. That’s 20%! Can you imagine the kind of results we could have at Gospel meetings today if we could get 100 lost souls to attend?

Don’t give up brethren, your preaching and teaching may be more effective “percentage wise” than you think and you may be getting a higher percentage today than the apostles got on the Day of Pentecost.

PO Box 49494
Cookeville, TN 38506
www.ibtministries.org

Seek The Old Paths is a monthly publication of the **Leoni Church of Christ** and is under the oversight of its elders. It is FREE, being supported by the contributions of both individuals and congregations. Its primary purpose and goal in publication can be found in Jude 3, 2 Tim. 4:2, Titus 1:13, Titus 2:1 and 2 Peter 1:12. All mail received may be published unless it is marked “not for publication.” The church building is located at: 2132 Old McMinnville Hwy, Woodbury, TN 37190.

Editor: **Garland M. Robinson** — seektheoldpaths.com

LEONI CHURCH OF CHRIST
PO BOX 7506
MCMINNVILLE, TN 37111
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Woodbury, TN
Permit No. 17