

SUNDAY MORNING

Announcements
Mark Davis

Song Leader
Daniel Allgor

Lord's Supper
Jon Barry Clay Morris
Jerry Schnelle Joseph Barry

Prayers
Bill Brittenham Pete Rowland

SUNDAY EVENING

Announcements
Mark Davis

Song Leader
Jack Calvert

Lord's Supper
Clay Morris Jerry Schnelle

Prayers
Jon Barry Cory Easley

WEDNESDAY

Announcements
Dee Minter

Song Leader
Cory Easley

Prayers
Clay Morris Cole Meador

Invitation
Gerald Eaton

ABOUT US

Elders
Jack Calvert Rodney Ellis

Deacons
Jon Barry Bill Brittenham
Mike Davis Dave Massey

Evangelist
Bryan Garlock

SERVICE TIMES

Sunday
Bible Study9:30 A.M.
Worship10:15 A.M.
Worship6:00 P.M.

Wednesday
Bible Study7:00 P.M.

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GOD'S PLAN FOR SALVATION

Hear the word of truth Romans 10:13-17

Believe the truth..... Hebrews 11:6; John 8:24

Repent from all sins Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38

Confess the name of Christ ... Matthew 10:32-33; Acts 8:35-30

Be Baptized in His name Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21; Colossians 2:12

Walk in newness of life and **be faithful** unto death Romans 6:1-4; Revelation 2:10

Think On These Things

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Issue 2

The Purpose of True Religion

Bob Myhan

There was no need for religion in the Garden of Eden prior to man's sin. Indeed, before man sinned against God, he did not need to be reconciled to God, which is the divinely-ordained purpose of religion.

“[T]he etymology of the word, [religion] in its Biblical sense, is ... from the ... Latin verb, *religo, religare*, meaning ‘to bind back’ or ‘to bind anew’.... The close relationship of the family of words formed around the root *lig* (ligament, ligature, oblige, etc.) to that formed around the root *leg* (*lex, legis*, ‘law,’ hence *legislate*, legal, etc.) is *too obvious to be* ignored. These two families of words both have the connotation of a binding force. Whatever the word ‘religion’ may have meant to the pagan world, the fact remains that the essence of Biblical religion is a *binding of a person anew to God* (healing of the schism caused by sin: the God of the Bible is the covenant God) and is fully expressed in the word ‘reconciliation’ (2 Cor. 5:17-21). Just as the essential principle of music is harmony; of art, beauty; of government, authority; of sin, selfishness; so

the fundamental principle of true religion is *reconciliation*. (Eph. 2:11-22; 2 Cor. 5:18-20, 6:14-18).” (Crawford, C. C. "The Beginning of Religion." In *Genesis: The Book of the Beginnings*, 368-369. Vol. One. Joplin, MO: College Press, 1966).

In Genesis 3:14-15, God revealed His intention to *bind man anew to Himself in Covenant relationship*. He said He would put “enmity between [the serpent] and the woman, and between [the serpent's] seed and her seed.” Enmity is the opposite of friendship; James wrote, “You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (James 4:4). To put enmity between the serpent and the woman, therefore, would be to restore the friendship that had previously existed between the woman and God. The serpent's seed would be all those who would make themselves enemies of God through sin (John 8:44). The woman's seed is Jesus Christ (Gal. 4:4). Those who

FAMILY TALK

Continue to remember and check on our shut-ins: **Willie Margaret Mobley, Bob Buls, Bonnie Allgor, Maxine Burnham, Francine Davis** and **Mary Alice Turner**. Cards, calls and visits are ALWAYS needed and appreciated.

Mary Alice Turner is in the hospital at Wadley.

Bill Rinehart is still recuperating from double knee replacement.

ANNUAL SINGING
Mt. Pleasant, Jan. 19 at 7:30 P.M.

Cont. from page 1

choose to be reconciled to God become enemies of the serpent, who of course is the Devil, Satan (Rev. 12:9).

Religion began with man's expulsion from Eden. God did not intend for man to be alienated from Him through sin but He knew that if He created a being who could sin, that being would sin. So, he purposed before the creation to save man from sin and give to man eternal life. Man was created *on earth* but he was created *for heaven*.

"Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began...." Titus 1:1-2; cf. 2 Tim. 1:8-9

Our first glimpse of religion is in the offerings of Cain and Abel. "In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard...." (Gen. 4:3-8).

What was the key to God's respect for Abel and his offering, and His lack of respect for Cain and his offering? Did He show partiality? No; Cain had the same opportunity to please God as did Abel. "By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks." (Heb. 11:4)

Abel offered his sacrifice "by faith." Cain could have had faith as well but did not. In those times, God spoke to the patriarchs (Heb. 1:1-2). He obviously had revealed His will concerning sacrifices to the two brothers. Abel complied with God's revealed will and demonstrated his faith, while Cain did not and demonstrated his lack of faith. The sentiments of Cain in regard to sacrifice are revealed in the New Testament (see 1 John 3:11-12).

Cain's works were evil because he heard the word of God concerning sacrifice, as did Abel, but chose not to comply. Rather, he offered what he thought God ought to accept. But God told Cain, "If you do well, will you not be accepted?" (Gen. 4:7).

The use of the plural, "gifts" (Hebrew 11:4) and "deeds" (1 John 3:12), tells us that the offerings in Genesis 4:3-5 were not one-time but periodical offerings. These brothers were worshipping the same God but by two different standards – Abel by the standard of God's word (true religion), and Cain by the standard

of his own opinion ("self-imposed religion" – Col. 2:23).

God revealed His will to us in just such a way that will best facilitate our understanding of it. If the Word of God – as the Son of God – had come into the world immediately after the first sin, man could not have fully appreciated the love of God. Therefore, God introduced the principle of sacrifice and developed that principle incrementally until such time that His love – as fully demonstrated via the sacrifice of His Son – could be appreciated and reciprocated by man.

As Jesus Himself illustrated this development, there was "first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head." (Mark 4:28) We might say the Patriarchal age was "the blade", the Mosaic age was "the head", and the church age (or Christian age) is "the full grain in the head."

Thus, true religion began after man's eviction from Eden. It has three elements: altar, sacrifice and priesthood. The respective altar, sacrifice and priesthood of the Patriarchal and Mosaic ages were prophetic types or shadows of the true – which is found in Christ (read Heb. 8:1-5; 9:11-12; 10:1-3).

Hundreds of years after preaching the gospel to the serpent, God preached it to Abraham (Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:8). He later preached it to Israel through Moses (Deut. 18:15-19), all the OT prophets (Acts 3:19-26), John the immerser (Matt. 3:1-2), Jesus (Matt. 4:17), the twelve apostles (Matt. 10:7) and the seventy (Luke 10:8-10). The sacrificial death of Jesus demonstrates fully the purpose of true religion.

"For the love of Christ constrains us, having judged thus – that if one has died for all, certainly all have died; and that he has

died for all, that they who live should no longer live to themselves, but to him who has died and rose again for them.... And all these things of God, who has reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation – namely, that God was, by Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not counting to them their trespasses, and has committed to us the word of the reconciliation. We, therefore, execute the office of ambassadors for Christ, as of God beseeching you by us; we pray you, in behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For he has made him, who knew no sin, a sin-offering for us; that we might become the justified of God, by him God." (2 Cor. 5:14-21, Living Oracles)

To *reconcile* is to make friends again. This is the ultimate purpose of true religion – God wooing man back to Himself through the cross of Christ.

2 Cor. 4:17 *For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

Paul's contrast between the "here and now" and "what is to come" is both simple and beautiful.

"Momentary" vs "Eternal".

"Light" vs "Weight".

"Affliction" vs "Glory".

Only as short-sighted, small-faithed people would we choose the "temporal" vs the "eternal".