

## IS IT POSSIBLE TO UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE?

By Bobby Key

If the Bible is completely beyond man's grasp, how could one expect to know God and be saved eternally? Doesn't it stand to reason that the God who gave us the revelation by which one is drawn to him (John 6:44,45), and by which he will some day be judged (John 12:48), would enable man to understand that revelation? If not, where is the hope of salvation for the average person?

"For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." (Romans 15:4.) Only through diligent study can

one "show himself approved unto God, a workman who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15.)

Much of our failure to understand is our unwillingness to understand. There is a failure to see which comes from the refusal to see. A man can deliberately shut his mind to truth he does not wish to see; he can be deliberately dense toward teaching he does not wish to accept. Nicodemus was like that.

If a man does not wish to be changed, he will deliberately shut his eyes and his mind and his heart to the very power able to change him. When the invitation

is offered by the Lord some of us could say if we were honest, "No thank you: I am quite satisfied with myself as I am, and I don't want to be changed."

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled." (Matthew 5:6.) This is God's promise to all men everywhere. The common people still hear Him gladly. (Mark 12:37.)

Surely the average person can understand Heaven's message.

Miami, OK

## MORALITY AND LEGALITY

By Danny Tunnell

We often hear, "You know, there ought to be a law against that." Often times, there is: God's law.

Should everything that is immoral also be made illegal in our society? Perhaps in a perfect world it would be that way.

Today's big moral issue is gay rights. The Bible teaches that homosexual practices are sinful and immoral. (Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:24-27.)

Not long ago the Church of England debated the issue of divorce. Should it be legal? The Bible says much about the sanctity of marriage and the wrongness of divorce. (Malachi 2:14,16; Matthew 19:3-9; Hebrews 13:4.) We live in a society where divorce is legal, however we should preach about it and oppose it when it violates the teachings of Scripture.

Another moral issue that has become legal in our society is abortion. Abortion violates God's basic law, "Thou shalt not murder." (Exodus 20:13.) We deplore the loss of even one life by abortion.

Many of us are strongly opposed to the legalization of abortion. One of those who held that view was the late

Dr. C. Everett Koop. In three decades of surgery at Philadelphia's Children's Hospital, Dr. Koop pioneered ways to save and repair premature and damaged babies. To Koop's mind, abortion was a black and white issue and he spoke passionately against the practice. He called the Roe v. Wade ruling that legalized abortion, "the most important event in American history since the Civil War."

Now let's fast forward. Dr. Koop became Surgeon General of the United States. He attracted much opposition from conservatives who have an all-or-nothing approach to morality. They oppose any legal compromise on abortion.

Let's listen carefully to what Dr. Koop said, a man who passionately cared about the physical wellbeing of children, and personally strongly opposed abortion. He said, "One of the problems with the pro-life movement is that they are one-hundred-percenters. Historically it is true that if the pro-life movement had sat down in, say, 1970 or 1972, with the pro-choice people, we might have ended up with an agreement on abortion for the life of the mother,

defective child, rape and incest, and nothing more. That would have saved ninety-seven percent of the abortions since then. Ninety-seven percent of twenty-five million is a lot of babies."

Today, if Dr. Koop is right, that would be ninety-seven percent of fifty-five million babies. Koop absolutely opposed abortion and homosexuality on moral and biblical grounds. But he understood something else as Surgeon General. He knew that Christian absolutes cannot always be legally imposed on those who do not share Christian beliefs.

Dr. Koop considered sodomy to be legally and morally wrong. But he still had compassion for AIDS patients. He said, "They remind me of kittens, so sick and so weak that they open their mouths to cry and no sound comes out. How can you not put your arm around that kind of person?"

Wouldn't it be better if all of us were more like Dr. Koop? He never seemed to compromise his principles, and yet he often displayed the same compassion that characterized Jesus.

Miami, OK

# Old Paths

Vol. 39, No. 7 July, 2015

"ask for the old paths" (Jer. 6:16)

## "WHY DOES THIS MAN SPEAK BLASPHEMOUS WORDS?"

By Milton Smith

At first glance, one might wonder what "evil" person this passage might be referring to. Actually, these words were in reference to Jesus himself! In Mark chapter two, Jesus entered into Capernaum and entered into a certain house. Many came to that home and Jesus preached to them. We also learn that four men brought a man sick of the palsy to Jesus, but because of the large crowd, they had to uncover the roof and lower this man down. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the sick man: "Son, your sins are forgiven you." It was here that we are told that certain scribes "reasoned in their hearts" that Jesus spoke blasphemous words because He claimed to forgive sins. They knew that only God could do this. The phrase "reasoned in their hearts" simply means that they did not actually speak these words but merely thought them.

But we are told that Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves. It was at this point that Jesus challenged them: "Why do you reason these things in your hearts? But that you may know that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins, I say unto this man: arise, take up your bed, and go to your home." This young man immediately arose, took up the bed, and went forth. Mark tells us that the people who witnessed this event were amazed and glorified God, saying: "We never saw anything like this!" It is simple to see the logic that Jesus followed here. To "forgive sins" is a process that is impossible to physically witness. So to prove that He had this power, He did something much more difficult that could be seen by all - He instantly healed this paralyzed man. Such a miracle verified His claim that He could forgive sins. These scribes were correct about one thing: only God can forgive sins. Thus, Jesus was affirming His own deity.

But Jesus exhibited another trait on this occasion that proved His deity. We are told that He "perceived that they reasoned within themselves these thoughts." In other words, He read their minds, again proving His claims! Imagine the base nature of such men who would dare accuse the Son of God of blasphemy!

Another day is coming when skeptics will stand before Jesus Christ and learn of His deity. On this great day, "every knee will bow and every tongue will confess." But, alas, it will be too late. Like those scribes, many doubters will someday learn that Jesus indeed is who He claimed to be. But the wise will acknowledge this fact now before it is everlastingly too late.

Tulsa, OK

## I AM RICH!

By Wayne Robbins

Many people spend their lifetime following a dream of becoming rich in this world's goods. Most of these people fail. There are a few that actually become wealthy by the world's standards, but often at a very high price. The love for wealth takes its toll spiritually. The love of riches leads one away from God. A person in love with money falls into the snare of the devil and into many hurtful things that afflict. (1 Timothy 6:9,10.) It is foolish to pursue earthly wealth for a few short years and then die, leaving it all to others, and losing one's soul in the process. (Luke 12:16-21.)

It is much better to be rich spiritually. The Christian has a Father that is very rich. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. (Psalm 50:10.) He owns all the gold and silver. (Haggai 2:8.) And above all, He gives the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ, His Son, which is priceless. (Romans 6:23.) This gift is worth more than all the wealth of this world, and is eternal. (Matthew 16:26.)

I am a Christian. As such I am an heir of God and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ. (Romans 8:17.) The riches of heaven will be mine to enjoy forever when this life is over. I am rich beyond measure.

Are you rich? If you want to become rich spiritually, you must stop loving the world (1 John 2:15-16), and begin loving God with all your heart and soul. (Matthew 22:37.) You must believe that Jesus is the Son of God, repent of your sins, confess Jesus as the Christ, be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), and begin faithfully living the Christian life. You will then become an heir of God and rich for all eternity!

Arkansas City, KS

## BETTER TO SUFFER WRONG THAN DO WRONG

By Bobby Key

It could be said that some of us are too stubborn, rebellious and hardheaded to go to heaven. We would rather fight than switch when our opinion is at stake. We would prefer to see the church disgraced and torn asunder than to accept mistreatment, real or imaginary. Paul told the Corinthians: "To have such arguments at all is a real defeat for you as Christians. Why not accept mistreatment and leave it at that? It would be far more honoring to the Lord to let yourself be cheated." (1 Corinthians 6:7, Living Letters.) Paul is talking about going to law with a brother; however, the principle applies to other areas of Christian behavior as well.

My friend, it is always better to suffer wrong than to do wrong.

I stand amazed in the presence of the Bible. It surpasses my own imagination how the Lord could reveal so many eternal truths and practical everyday problems and solve them in one book. When we fail to follow the Lord's way there is anger and ill feelings, if not absolute hatred between brethren. It is hard for a brother bent on getting his due to pray, "Father, forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who have trespassed against us."

The devil laughs, angels weep, and the world turns away in disgust at the sight of the way brothers and sisters sometimes act toward each other. Why can't we learn to turn the other cheek? Follow the Master, "who when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judges righteously." (1 Peter 2:23.)

The Christian should be willing to take less than he thinks he has coming to him in order to avoid disgracing the church. It is better to suffer wrongfully (Christ did) than to do harm to the church for which Christ died.

Miami, OK

Editorial . . .

## AN INTERESTING QUESTION

By Dalton Key

President Abraham Lincoln once wrote a terse letter to General George McClellan during the dark days of the Civil War.

McClellan, in command of the Union army, had been conducting a fruitless waiting campaign, refusing to attack the confederates when opportunities had been clearly available. Though prompted time and time again to act, the general continued promising to do something while doing next to nothing. Many scholars lay the blame for McClellan's failed Peninsular Campaign to this over-cautious strategy. Lincoln's letter was direct and to the point: "My dear McClellan: If you do not wish to use the army, I should like to borrow it for awhile."



Lincoln later dismissed McClellan from command and brought in a general willing to engage the enemy.

Like McClellan, many of us who wear the name of Christ are long on potential, long on promise, but woefully short on performance. Too often we "say, and do not do." (Matthew 23:3.)

Scripture is clear: "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more." (Luke 12:48.) Those of us in Christ, having received such mercy, grace and forgiveness as we now enjoy, and surrounded by myriad, daily opportunities to shine for Christ as lights in a world of darkness, are expected to live lives of devotion and commitment. "I beseech you brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." (Romans 12:1.) We are expected to be "doers of the word." (James 1:21.) Serving the Lord involves doing all that we can, wherever we are, with whatever we have.

With opportunity comes responsibility; with responsibility comes accountability. The brethren at Laodicea were rebuked and chastened and ordered to repent of their smug lukewarm attitude, a condition that seems to have sickened the Lord, causing Him to vomit them out of His mouth. (Revelation 3:14-19.) Are we, as well, making the Lord sick?

This is no time for indifference, apathy or timidity. The time for talking has passed. Empty promises, whether said or sung, are hollow at best. The Lord expects us to dig up our discarded talents and finally get busy, "always abounding" in His work. (1 Corinthians 15:58.) Satan is not hesitating; his minions are not shy. We should be just as bold for right and righteousness as the forces of evil are in advancing the cause of the adversary.

Consider this question: Could the Lord send you a letter, stating, "If you do not wish to use (your talents, your time, your money, your opportunities), I should like to borrow them for awhile?"

## HE CARES

By Ron Stough

I once heard the story of a little boy who called his grandfather to explain that he had been delayed because his friend had broken a toy. "Did you help him fix it?" asked the grandfather. "No, it couldn't be fixed," said the boy, "but I sat down and cried with him. Grandfather, it is a terrible thing when you have to cry alone."

Paul urged that same attitude in Romans 12:15 when he told his readers, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." One great blessing of being a Christian is that we do not have to weep alone. Our

brothers and sisters stand ready to shed tears with us in our sorrow. They are concerned when we are concerned. The outpouring of prayer and love for those who have loved ones in the Military and in harm's way is a great example of this Christ-like attitude.

Sometimes, however, we feel that not even our brothers and sisters understand the pain we are feeling. In that case, we have the ultimate blessing of a Savior who weeps with us as he did with Mary and Martha in the long ago. The prophet Isaiah said, "Surely he has borne our griefs, and

carried our sorrow . . ." (Isaiah 53:4.) Let us remember to follow the instructions of Peter in 1 Peter 5:7 when he said, "casting all your anxiety upon him, because he cares for you."

Duncan, OK

"For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:15,16.)

## OF HAIL AND RAIN

By Luke Bower

The other day I overheard a conversation between several men who were complaining about a recent hailstorm. They both had a sad story to tell about damaged cars and ruined roofs. During their discussion, a third voice chimed in and said, "at least we got some rain." They both more or less dismissed the comment and continued complaining. But I couldn't get it out of my head. What a different way to think about things!

We can fix roofs, we can buy new cars, but we can't make it rain. There are so many people praying for rain, we shouldn't let a drop fall without lifting up thanks. As a disciple of Christ, looking at the brighter side of things is

not only a good idea, it is also a command. In Philippians 4, Paul tells us to "rejoice in the Lord always" (vs. 4) and adds, "whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." (vs. 8.) This isn't always easy. The bigger the storm, the harder it is to see the silver lining. But it is still something for which we should strive. Remember - next time you find yourself complaining about the hail life has thrown you - not to forget about the rain.

Abilene, TX

### Old Paths

829 S. Rockford Ave.,  
Tulsa, OK. 74120

On a nonprofit basis.  
Published monthly and supported by Churches of Christ and individuals.

Dalton Key Editor

"Subscription Free;

Prayers Requested;

Contributions Appreciated."