



The Voice of Truth

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God's Good Gifts

By Jimmy Pettigrew

Men are surrounded by the goodness from God. "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of Jehovah in the land of the living," (**Psalm 27:13**). David confidently believes he will see proof of the goodness of the Lord while he is yet in the land of the living. We see the goodness of God; we are surrounded by gifts from God. Rain, sunshine, the earth and fruitful seasons (**Matthew 5:45; Acts 14:17**). Life is a gift from God (**Ecclesiastes 12:7**). We can truly say God, "Oh how great is thy goodness," (**Psalm 31:19**). The goodness of God leads us to repentance (**Romans 2:4**). God's goodness is infinite; there is enough for all, enough for each, enough for evermore!

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning," (**James 1:17**). In verse **12-15**, James had warned his readers against a false view of God which would make Him the source of our temptations to evil. The idea that such is the case both degrades God into an evil being and overlooks the great mercies which He constantly pours into our lives.

God is the source of life's good things. He sends only good things, and He sends them constantly. Solicitation to evil comes from Satan and our own selfish desires, not from God!

God's greatest gift is Jesus Christ (**John 3:16; Romans 6:23**). "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift," (**2 Corinthians 9:15**). A gift shows love for and interest in one. God loved and gave. If we love in return, we give to God, self, time and talents.

Water Now or Fire Later

By Jonathan L. Perz

The Bible reveals two times that God has or will destroy the world. It is significant to note some similarities and differences between both events.

In the days of Noah, God determined "that every intent of the thoughts of [man's] heart was only evil continually" (**Genesis 6:5**). So the Lord said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them" (**Genesis 6:7**). This being so, God destroyed the sinful world beneath water, except Noah and his household, who found grace in His sight (**Genesis 6:8**). They would rise above the water in an ark which they built by faith in the commandment of God (**Hebrews 11:7**).

In like fashion, God has planned a day which He will once again destroy the world, but not by water (**Genesis 9:11-13**). "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with a fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up . . . the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat..." (**2 Peter**

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3:10,12). This destruction will accompany the final judgment of mankind (cf. **2 Thessalonians 1:6-10; Hebrews 9:27**). The believing will reside in heaven with God for the entirety of eternity (cf. **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17**) and the unbelieving and unrighteous will be cast into a lake of fire (**Revelation 20:11-15; Revelation 21:8**).

These events are similar in several ways. Both are judgments against mankind. Both involve the destruction of the wicked. Both involve the salvation of the faithful. Both demonstrate the goodness and the severity of God (cf. **Romans 11:22**). Both are sudden and without warning upon those who do not believe (**Matthew 24:36-39**), though God is extremely longsuffering (**1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 3:9,15**). Still, only a comparative few will be saved. These events differ in one critical way. Where the first employed water for destruction, the second will employ fire. In Noah's day, those who were wicked were destroyed by water (**Genesis 9:11**). Yet, those who entered the ark of safety were "saved through water" (**1 Peter 3:21**). In the final judgment, the earth and the wicked will be destroyed by fire (**2 Thessalonians 1:8; Revelation 20:15**) and the only means of salvation will be "in Christ" (cf. **Acts 4:12**).

This difference is manifested in an interesting way when we consider two of the baptisms spoken of in the New Testament—water baptism and the baptism of fire.

John the Baptist said that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire (**Luke 3:16**) and the content reveals beyond any doubt that John is speaking of the final judgment of mankind. He says the "wheat (righteous, jlp) will be gathered into His barn (heaven, jlp) and the chaff (sinners, jlp) will be burned with unquenchable fire (hell, jlp)" (**Luke 3:17**).

At the same time, when Peter spoke of Noah's salvation, he spoke of it as a type of baptism, in which we are "saved through water" (**1 Peter 3:21**). Jesus commanded this baptism (**Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:19-20**). The apostles obeyed by baptizing in water (**Acts 2:38, 40-41; Acts 8:36-38; Acts 10:47-48, etc.**). John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus by baptizing in water (**John 3:23**). We are taught that this baptism puts us "into Christ" (**Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:26-27**), where we ultimately find salvation (cf. **Acts 2:47**).

Indeed, "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**). To ignore the warnings found in the story of Noah regarding the impending judgment of God will result in the same inevitable fate that met those who ignored Noah's preaching (**2 Peter 2:4 ff**).

Therefore, two options ultimately remain—the baptism of water into a faithful life in Christ NOW or the baptism of fire into eternal condemnation LATER. To reject the first is to accept the latter. To reject both is to accept the latter. Thus, the only rational choice is to heed the warning and "obey the gospel" today.

"IT'S CONVENIENT"

By David J. Riggs

The wicked king Jeroboam when establishing his new religion made two golden calves and set one in Bethel and the other in Dan and said to the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!" (**1 Kings 12:28**). Thus, he beguiled the people by making things convenient and they gullibly accepted it (**1 Kings 12:30**). Similarly, there are many modern day convenient doctrines and practices.

(1) **Sprinkling or pouring for baptism**. Substituting sprinkling or pouring for baptism seems to be a very easy and convenient way to accomplish baptism; however, it is not what the Lord commanded. **Col. 2:12** says, "Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead." (See

also **Rom. 6:3-4**). Bible baptism requires a going down into and a coming up out of the water (**Acts 3:38-39**). God did not give man a choice in this matter, but plainly stated what He wanted.

(2) **Can't fall from grace.** This would be a very convenient and comforting doctrine if true. There would be no need for a pure life or faithful service for none of those things would matter. On the contrary, Paul said, "You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace." (**Gal. 5:4**). Some try to evade this by saying, "If one falls away, he wasn't saved to start with." However, **James 5:12, 19-20; Heb. 3:12** and many others passages speak of brethren falling away.

(3) **Death bed salvation or repentance.** How convenient it would be if one could enjoy the pleasures of sin and neglect all forms of worship and duty, but at the last breath call on the Lord and be received up into glory! There is no indication in the Bible that the one who has been stubborn and rebellious to God's will all his life and waits to the last minute to repent, will be saved. There are only passages to the contrary (**Ezek. 8:17-18; Prov. 1:24-28**).

(4) **Sincerity is sufficient.** Many think that it doesn't make any difference which church one is a member of so long as he is honest and sincere. However, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." (**Prov. 16:25**). It would be very convenient indeed if only honesty and sincerity were required, but needless to say, men can be sincerely wrong and honestly mistaken. If one church is as good as another as some claim, why not join a church which caters to one's own sinful desires? If one church is as good as another, it would mean that the "Church of the Devil" in California is as good as the Lord's church! Instead of joining the church of your choice, why not become a member of the church of God's choice?

(5) **Institutionalism.** The word "visit" (**James 1:27; Matt. 25:35-36, 43**) involves actually going to see and looking upon (Thayer, p. 142; Vine, p. 190). One has not "visited" an orphan, widow, or prisoner unless he has personally gone to see them and while there ministered to their needs. Sending a donation to a human institution is a very convenient dodge of what God requires.

What Does the Cross Teach?

By Jimmy Pettigrew

The fact of a crucified and risen Savior is the very heart of Christianity. It is not within man's power to save himself (**Jeremiah 10:23**). How thankful we should be that we can be reconciled to God, but only through the cross of Christ (**Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:20**). May we consider some things which the cross teaches?

1. Man's guilt (**Romans 3:9-10, 23**)
2. God's righteousness (**Romans 3:24-26**)
3. God's power to save (**Romans 1:16; 8:3**)
4. God's gracious offer (**John 3:16; Titus 2:11**).
5. God's love (**Romans 5:8; John 3:16**)
6. Necessity of man's obedience (**Philippians 2:8; Hebrews 5:8-9**)
7. To assure Christians that cleansing is available (**1 John 1:7-10**)
8. Shows the worth of the church (**Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25**)
9. The need for holy living (**1 Corinthians 6:18-20; 1 Peter 1:15**)
10. The need for humility (**Philippians 2:5-8**)

Christ came to earth to do the will of His Father. He willingly endured the persecution and pain that wicked man brought upon Him. He humbly obeyed God, and died on the cross for the sins of mankind. Looking at what the cross teaches should cause us to gladly and willingly give up anything that stands between us and God. It should result in an attitude of

commitment and dedication like we have never seen. It should motivate one to be restored. It should cause one to become a Christian.

The Church of Christ

Has:

One Builder – Jesus Christ (**Matt. 16:18; Eph. 3:9-11**)
One Purchaser – Jesus Christ (**Acts 20:28**)
One Head – Jesus Christ (**Eph. 1:22-23**)
One Savior – Jesus Christ (**Eph. 5:23**)
One destiny – eternal salvation (**Eph. 5:23**)

IS:

The spiritual body of Christ (**Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23**)
The kingdom of Christ (**Matt. 16:18-19; Heb. 12:28**)
The depository of those saved (**Acts 2:47**)
One body, not many bodies (**Eph. 4:4; 1:22-23**)
One way to be added to the church:
One must believeth that Christ is the Son of God (**Jno. 8:24**)
One must repent of sins (**Lk. 13:3**)
One must confess that Christ is the Son of God (**Rom. 10:9-10**)
One must be baptized into Christ (**Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; Gal. 3:26-27**)

Points to Ponder

No one becomes a Christian on his own terms.
Never give an excuse you would not be willing to accept.

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear and Learn - Rom. 10:17 m. 10:9-10 ; 1 Pet. 3:21 ; John 6:45; 17:3
Believe - Heb. 11:6; John 6:29; 8:24
Repent - Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 17:30
Confess the Lord - Matt. 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:21
Be Baptized - Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27
Continue in the Apostles' Teaching - Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:14-17