



# The REFLECTOR

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## How Can We Replace Them?

by Bob Waldron

It is sad to think of the passing of stalwart men who have fought the spiritual battles of days gone by. One may almost despair in thinking of our having to go on without them. Often the question is asked, "How can we replace men like that?" or "How can I become a great preacher like \_\_\_\_\_?" Let us share a few thoughts on this subject.

One thing we must understand. The church is God's. He will provide Himself with servants. Men come and men go, but God remains; His purpose is from everlasting. His word will endure forever. We may freely take comfort in these facts. While we believe these things, however, many wish to ask, "What can I do, though, to replace brother \_\_\_\_\_?" "How can I become a great and influential preacher like he was?"

Some preachers, young and old, get the mistaken notion that if they copy the tone of voice, clothing style, personal eccentricities, gestures, etc., of some prominent preacher, then they are truly a faithful reproduction of the preacher they admire. They fail to see that such things are merely the surface layer of any man. The essence of a man's usefulness in God's kingdom is deeper than such shallow things. Imitating such shallow details makes shallow preachers.

Such ill-fated efforts stem from: (1) a lack of understanding of what scriptural greatness is, and (2) ignorance of how to achieve such greatness. For example, men commonly think that to be great is to be well-known. That is the world's concept, not God's. Consequently it is obvious that what men may subconsciously want is to be well-known without being great. One who seeks to be well-known will have to do different things than one who seeks to be great in the service of God.

It sounds paradoxical to the world, but the hallmarks of greatness in God's eyes are humility and faithful service.

John the Baptist was great in the eyes of the Lord (Lk. 1:75). Spiritual stature, then, is not determined by one's collection of degrees, nor by his pedigree of preaching ancestors, nor by genius, nor by how many books one has written, nor how many lecture-ships one has participated in. It is rather determined by how much of a servant he is. "Not so shall it be among you: but whosoever would 'become great among you shall be your servant'" (Mt. 20:26). Does he always place the kingdom of God first? (Mt. 6:33) Does he truly care for the souls of men? (Phil. 2:20) Is he willing to spend and be spent? (2 Cor. 12:15)

Now what is the proper way to seek to be great? Beware! One may be seeking reputation and fame. When we set out to command the respect and admiration of brethren, to be well-known, we are doomed already in striving to be a man great in the sight of God. One is selfish and carnally-minded when he has that attitude. Men such as Franklin Puckett did not achieve greatness by seeking for it, but he served God faithfully and usefully, and God gave him greatness.

I have often envisioned the judgment as a time when many men who thought surely they were the greatest in the kingdom of God will have to take a back seat. Many mothers in Israel whose names were unknown by the world will be found to have achieved greatness in the sight of Almighty God. They will have done it by unremitting toil, sacrifice of personal ambitions, by giving mind and body completely to their task. You want to know how to achieve spiritual great-

ness? Well, that is how!

If young men will set their minds on things that are above (Col. 3:2), and prepare to serve God faithfully, God will see to it that His servants are replaced. Study hard and prepare; then when the time is right, the place of service will be there. Be of good courage. Take that place and fill it to the best of your ability. Work humbly, not worrying about who will get the credit. Remember, though, if your preparation is not what will fit you for God's service, then He may pass you by when He picks someone to perform some task for Him. Also remember that Moses thought he was ready to serve forty years before God thought he was.

To do the work of an evangelist, one needs preparation that will enable him to save souls. Since the gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16), it must be carefully studied. Your PhD will be of no special help in preaching the simplicity of the gospel of Christ. One needs also to prepare to be able to deal with men skillfully, to teach them Christ. Do not get out of touch with the common man. If you do, you will have lost access to most of your audience. If you are an intellectual, keep it a good secret. Do not let it show in your preaching. All preachers and teachers will do well to remember that one of the marks of a great teacher is that he can take the profound and complex and set it forth in clear, understandable terms. Take it as a challenge to see how simple a difficult subject can be made.

Make your preparations. Study, pray, meditate. Then serve as God provides the opportunity. In this manner men may follow the path to greatness in God's sight, and whether one is ever well-known or not, he will receive an abundant entrance unto eternal life. This is "very far better." ①

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provide Himself with servants."*

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# The Sting of Death and A Jewish Rabbi

• by Norman E. Fultz

Recently, just before the Jewish Hanukkah, a rabbi of the Reformed Jewish Temple Israel of Memphis was being interviewed on a television talk show. One of the questions posed and the rabbi's answer to it particularly "stuck" with me. He was asked about the Jewish reaction to death among them. He explained that death to them was perhaps more painful and occasioned more grief than for Christians (he used the term in its philosophical sense), because they do not place the emphasis on the "after world or immortality" that Christians do. Several things came to mind as I thought upon his statement.

One of the great objectives of New Testament Christianity is that Christians need not sorrow over deceased loved ones "as others which have no hope" (1 Thess. 4:13). There is no lack of thought given to the "after world" by the writers of the New Testament. "In hope of eternal life . . ." (Tit. 1:2); ". . . the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life" (1 Jn. 2:25); ". . . lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called . . ." (1 Tim. 6:12); ". . . waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope . . ." (Rom. 8:23-24); ". . . we have a building of God . . . eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. 5:1). And Paul reasoned that "if in this life only we have hope in Christ Jesus, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. 15:19). And this is a hope that can give comfort in death (1 Thess. 4:18). Christians are told of the "crown of righteousness" (2 Tim. 4:7-8) and the "crown of life" (Rev. 2:10) and of being "willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8). Such hope is to be found only in Christ (1 Cor. 15:22; 1 Thess. 4:14,16) "who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10).

Why do these Jews not give much thought to "the after world or immortality?" Perhaps for the simple reason that they become arbitrary in the parts of the scripture they respect. For example, the rabbi was asked about the offering of animal sacrifices, and he

said that since A.D. 70 there had been no animal sacrifices by Jews. Why so? He quoted from Genesis to explain his keeping of the seventh day Sabbath which is part of the same covenant which required animal sacrifices and other ceremonies. He did not explain why the one is kept and the other is not. But, I suspect it is because they handle the Old Covenant just about like many claiming to be Christians handle the New. What they like, they keep; what they do not like or what presents some difficulty, they disregard. Paul indicates that Jews of his day allowed the hope of a resurrection from the dead (Acts 24:15). So, these modern Reformed Jews must just choose to ignore those references that lead to a belief in an "after world and immortality." But, in presenting evidence of the resurrection to the Jews of his day, Peter quoted from their writings (Psalm 16:8-11; Acts 2:25-28). The Jews still read with a veil upon their hearts (2 Cor. 3:15-16), but that veil is taken away in the

Lord.

And I thanked God for the privilege of exercise in godliness which is "profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8), and for the thrilling promise that death shall be "swallowed up in victory" assuring us that our "labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:54-58). And I remembered the comfort that came to me as I stood by the coffin of my father several years ago and thought of Paul's words, "if our earthly house of this tabernacle . . ." (2 Cor. 5:1). And while there was sorrow at the loss and a feeling of deep shock in his sudden death, it was not a sorrow as those who have no hope.

Kind reader, do you have this hope? It can be yours as a child of God. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:26-27). ①

P. O. Box 502  
Dyersburg, TN 38024

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## The Age of Accountability

• by Truman Smith

I am often asked, "What is the age of accountability?" or "At what age must one obey the gospel?" For some strange reason, many have the idea that one must be twelve years old before he can be baptized. Others feel that a person must be into his "teens" before he is really old enough for baptism.

As to age twelve, some seem to think simply because it was at this age that Jesus was observed "in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions" (Lk. 2:41-52), that this indicated Jesus had reached the age of accountability when He became twelve years old. Also, Mormons teach that a child must be at this age before he is a qualified subject for baptism.

The truth of the matter is, the fact that Jesus was twelve years of age at the time of this experience in the temple, has exactly nothing to do with ascertaining the age of accountability;

and the fact that some religious groups have set a certain age at which to accept their members is no authority at all.

The very fact that Jesus simply said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mk. 16:15-16), shows that the Scriptural candidate for baptism must be capable of believing the gospel, and believing the gospel requires an understanding of the gospel.

Also, Acts 2:38 says, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins . . ." This, as well as other passages, shows the requirement of repentance on the part of the person to be baptized; yet 2 Cor. 7:10 shows that "godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation . . ." Thus, godly sorrow is demanded to bring one to repentance.

Romans 10:9-10 and Acts 8:36-37

# What If Christ Should Come Today?

• by Robert Wayne LaCoste

Several years ago, as I was traveling from Phoenix to Globe, Arizona, to preach the gospel, I happened through a canyon called "Devil's Canyon" (Oh, the irony!) and noticed an inscription someone had written on a rock: CHRIST MAY COME TODAY.

The emphatic truthfulness of that statement has lingered in my mind since that day and I am confident it has encouraged me even further to live acceptably in the sight of the heavenly Father.

Now, should the statement have read, "Christ is coming today," that would have been erroneous, for the Bible plainly teaches, "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 25:13). But, the inscription simply stated, "Christ MAY come today." Never were truer words written.

But now, dear reader, ponder seriously this question: "What If Christ Did Come Today?" You may be thinking with those Peter described in his second epistle, "Where is the promise of His coming, for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Pet. 3:4). Do not be so deceived in thinking that God dwells in time as does man and because a great period of time has elapsed, that the promise has become void. Peter went on to write, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness . . ." (2 Pet. 3:9).

Suppose for a moment we knew for a fact that the Lord was coming TODAY. Think about it! What would you change in your life? For example: to those who have not obeyed the gospel, would it be safe to assume you would tarry no longer in delaying your obedience?

When Jesus does come again, He is coming for several reasons, one of which is to claim the obedient. "I go to prepare a place for YOU and if I go to prepare a place for YOU, I will come again, and receive you unto myself . . ." (John 14:3). The *you* in this context, is the same so often described in other passages relative to the *obed-*

*ient*. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). "He that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13). Friend, in light of these truths, let me encourage you to obey the gospel. Ask in humility "What shall I do to be saved?" as so many have done before you. The answer is always the same: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-38; Acts 22:16, etc.). I am quite sure that if we knew Jesus were coming today, we would want to change our relationship with God, if we are not His children, to becoming such. The Bible only makes Christians only. YOU need to obey the truth if you have not yet done so.

To those readers who are Christians, who have obeyed "that form of doctrine delivered" (Rom. 6:17), the question is given: "Do, and where would you want to be found, if you knew for a fact the Lord was coming

TODAY?"

Without making any prophecies or predictions, may I state that it would not surprise me at all to see our Lord come on a Sunday or Wednesday evening. If and should He come at that time, He is going to catch a lot of Christians napping. Many are forsaking their Lord by neglecting the worship and work of God's people. Brethren, "awake, thou that sleepest" before the inevitable. We can have "boldness" indeed in the day of judgment (1 John 4:17), but only can we be bold if we are watching and waiting for His coming. In short, READY.

Yes, if we knew Christ were coming TODAY, we might make a lot of changes in our lives, but then again, WHO IS TO STAND AND SAY: HE WILL SURELY NOT COME TODAY? Truly, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). **U**

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## The Age of Accountability

show that a proper subject for baptism must *confess* his faith in the Lord Jesus "with thy mouth."

It all boils down to the question of *responsibility*. What is the age of responsibility? There is no fixed age that will fit everybody. And, because people differ in this respect, no one is in a position to say what age one must be to obey the gospel. Thus, it is not a question of age, but that which is a matter of responsibility before God.

There is an aspect of baptism which I am certain too many overlook. It is an *individual* matter. Now, don't misunderstand me! I am not saying that it is *altogether* an individual matter; but the obedience or act of baptism is that which is *done only by the candidate*. God's plan is: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved . . ." (Mk. 16:15-16). The one who will be saved is *any body* who submits to this plan, upon hearing the gospel and believing it and "is baptized." His humble submission

to God's plan is the act of obeying the gospel of Christ.

Therefore, since obeying the gospel is done *only* by the individual who is responsible before God, it is often necessary to *know the child*, or question him to find out as nearly we can if he has attained unto sufficient knowledge of the truth and his background often indicates many things as to whether or not he is old enough to become a child of God. He might not be emotionally ready, nor mentally prepared for baptism.

But, parents, do not rush your child into "gett'n baptized" just because others near his age have obeyed the gospel. Let the child believe the gospel, repent of his sins, confess his faith in Jesus Christ, and be baptized for the remission of sins. Let him obey "from the heart that form of doctrine;" for that is the *Lord's way* to obtain salvation.

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1020 Max Rd.  
Houston, TX 77015

# Guilt

• by Keith Sharp

In the book of 1 John we learn how we can have fellowship both with God and His faithful children. "That which we have seen and heard we declare unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with the Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). The basic test of this fellowship is that we must not "walk in darkness" (1 John 1:6) but rather "in the light" (verse 7). There are several tests of "walking in the light" revealed in 1 John, but the first is made known in the next verses:

"If ye say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

"If we say we have not sinned, we make ourselves a liar, and his name is blasphemed among the Gentiles" (1 John 1:8-10).

Before we can ever be in fellowship with God and His saints, we must confess our sins. "For that which every man hath committed that is hid, shall come to light, and all the world become guilty before God" (Romans 3:19). This is not because we have inherited sin but because we "... all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23, cf. 1 John 1:10). Rather than trusting ourselves that we are righteous, we must cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:9-14).

When modern psychologists and psychiatrists attempt to explain the problem of personal guilt, they, appealing to human wisdom rather than to God's Word, speak of it as a complex. They attempt to remove personal responsibility and guilt by blaming what the Bible labels as "sin" on a person's

"environmental handicaps" as a child. Often they only treat the symptom and not the real cause by seeking to explain away the reality and the fact of guilt or to remove it from one's consciousness (and conscience) through drugs and other means.

God's solution is far different. He appeals to us to face reality. You have sinned. To deny it is to deceive yourself, tell a lie and attempt to make God a liar (1 John 1:8-10), even though

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He "cannot lie" (Titus 1:2). To understand the magnitude of our guilt, we must face the fact that the sacrifice of the perfectly righteous and only begotten Son of God was the only offering sufficient to be a propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:1-2).

But, while the Word of God forces us to face the fact of guilt, it does not leave us despondent in utter rejection. The Bible gives us hope, not despair. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful

and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

While we are told not to sin, and the heinousness of sin is factually described, yet gracious provisions are extended to us when we sin. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:1-2).

Thus, the Bible gives the Christian a very practical tool with which to overcome the sense and reality of guilt. "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity" (Acts 8:22-23). "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16). Repent. Confess your faults both to God and to your brethren. Pray for forgiveness. Rejoice in the reality of reconciliation to God and restoration to fellowship with His children.

"Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7, NASB). **Ⓢ**

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