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Jesus, the Lamb of God

by George R. Brunk II

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I have as my subject the whole Bible. The central message of the Word of God, Old Testament and New.

For a text to state in a congealed form what is the central message of the whole Bible, I call your attention to a verse in the first chapter in John's gospel and verse 29. "And the next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him and saith: 'Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.'"

Keep that in your mind, because we are going to see what is the significance of the "world" in there. Now, "the Lamb of God." "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." In seminary, where I spent a number of years, we pay attention to what we call "The Unfolding Message of the Bible," or sometimes we put it this way: "The Progress Doctrine." We try to show how that a certain doctrine begins very small, like the bud of a rose, and then as you go through the Bible, book by book, it opens up like a lovely flower. That's progress; and gradual unfolding of a given doctrine. That's the way God does it. He didn't reveal it all at once – He gradually unfolds His truth in the Bible. And we are going to see how God did it in one instance. We are going to look at all the passages in the whole Bible that have the word *lamb* in them.

Lamb – the Lamb of God. John saw Jesus and said, "Look! Look! Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." The first occurrence of the word *lamb* is in the Old Testament. You will find it in the Book of Genesis, Chapter 22; it's in this chapter that we have the account of Abraham offering his son Isaac as a sacrifice. God had promised Abraham that his seed would number like the stars of the sky, like the sand of the sea. He had no children. He and Sarah were both too old. Abraham tried to help God fulfill that promise and you know what trouble and tragedy came as a result of that. But after a while, Abraham and Sarah had their own child, Isaac. You read in this chapter about that time when God commanded Abraham to offer this only child. And Abraham being a man of faith, he proceeded to do what God told him to do; he was that kind of man. You remember when he moved out of Ur of the

Chaldees, God said, "I want you to move." He didn't tell him where. Abraham was a man of faith. When God said, "I want you to offer your only son," he proceeded to do so. And you know, I see little Isaac with his father Abraham. He had seen his father offer sacrifices on many occasions; he knew what was involved. He knew it took wood; he knew it took fire; he knew it took an animal. And so, as they were journeying along to Moriah, little Isaac said to Abraham, "Papa Abraham, here's the wood, where is the sacrifice?" And you remember that Abraham said. "Son, God will provide." He arranged the altar, everything, little Isaac standing there watching, thinking, "Papa said God is going to provide, he's got the altar and the wood arranged, he's got a big knife." And Abraham raises it and God says, "Hold it!" Abraham turned around and saw an animal caught in a thicket. An animal, a lamb, his wool caught in there; he can't get loose. There is the substitute; here is an animal that is substitute for Isaac, for one person. Be sure you get this: in Genesis 22, it is a substitute; an animal is a substitute for ONE person, Isaac. Now here, beloved, is the foundation and the basis of the substitutionary atonement. That's it. Christ died for ALL. Christ our substitute, Christ who went to the cross for US and paid the price of our redemption in the shedding of His precious blood. Hallelujah! For that sacrifice, that substitutionary atonement, is the foreshadowing of it right there. A substitute, an animal

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caught in a thicket, a substitute for Isaac.

Go to the next occurrence of it in the book of Exodus, to the twelfth chapter of the book of Exodus. The next passage that has *lamb* in it is Exodus 12. We have the account of the deliverance of the children of Israel out of Egypt. God delivers the children of Israel out of Egypt. They are in slavery. God said, "Let my people go." And Pharaoh said. "No." He sent one plague after another and Pharaoh was softened until the plague was gone, then he got tough again and would say, "No, I won't let your people go." Finally, God seemed to say, "Buddy, I'll give you one so you WILL let them go." And He told the children of Israel, "I want you to take a lamb per family, slay it, retain the blood, and sprinkle the blood on the lintel..." (that means on top of the door and on the doorposts); blood on either side of the door, "...and when I see the blood, I will pass over you." They slayed their animals; they sprinkled the blood. The death messenger came through at night and there was death to the firstborn of man and beast wherever there was no blood. Now what have you got? You have a substitute for a FAMILY. What did we have in Genesis? We had a substitute for ONE, Isaac. Now in Exodus we have a substitute for a family. The blood still typifying, unfolding; you see we are moving across this platform, so to speak, from Genesis to Revelation. We are in Exodus now and we see some unfolding. It was one person in Genesis and now it is a family in Exodus, for which there is a substitute made. It is an animal substitute, but see how effective and sufficient it is.

The next one is in the book of Leviticus. Now here is the exception: we cannot look at every one of these in Leviticus; we must look at Leviticus as a whole because it is filled with sacrifice, with the slaughtering of animals, of lambs. In Leviticus we have the substitutionary principle; here is the substitute for a NATION. What was it in Genesis? Substitution for one person, Isaac. In Exodus it was a substitute for a family and in Leviticus it is a substitute for a nation. There you have it: it's opening up; it's unfolding; it's getting bigger. This beautiful rose is opening – the principle of the substitutionary atonement – but they are animals.

Where are we going to go next? Isaiah 53. You must not miss this one. Isaiah 53 may be described as the watershed of the Bible. Do you understand *watershed*? Now in our American continent we have what we call "The Great Divide." It is a place where the rainwater falls and runs into the Pacific and just a few feet or so away from that where the rain falls, it runs into the Mississippi and into the Gulf of Mexico and into the Atlantic. It's the Great Divide. Isaiah 53 is a great divide. What I mean is, that all the references prior to Isaiah 53, all the verses about the lamb before Isaiah 53 refer to an animal. And the verses in Isaiah 53 and thereafter refer not to an animal but to a

Person. The Great Divide. Put a mark right there on the margin of your Bible in Isaiah 53 and say, Great Divide – before this animals, after this the Son of God. Now read: "Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." That is, he lacks not beauty, there is none that you would desire for him, he doesn't lack it. "He is despised." Now notice the personal pronoun, not "it," not the animal, the person: he, HE. We look back now, we know who that was and who that is. "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows." See, a man; not an animal. "A MAN of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions." Here is your substitutionary atonement. "He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." You can go through that whole chapter, go through the whole thing, a PERSON, a MAN, the MAN Christ Jesus has now become the Lamb of God. That's good enough to say "Hallelujah" the second time. Praise God! Jesus as the fulfiller and the fulfillment of that which has been foreshadowed in the animals of the Old Testament.

Now we are through with the Old Testament. The first occurrence of the word *lamb* in the New Testament is John 1:29. And you have it occurring again several verses down in v. 39. "And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!" Now to verse 29, John said of Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the WORLD." Oh, back there was a substitute for Isaac, and then in Exodus a substitute for a family, and then in Leviticus a substitute for a nation and now in John, a substitute for the whole world. I believe that Jesus Christ paid the price of redemption for everybody in the world that has ever been born or ever will be. Now I know there are some sin-sad people who've been taught that Jesus only died for a few. But, oh, the number of Scriptures that tell us that He died for all. He is indeed the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the whole world. But for it to be effective, it must be received by faith. That's right. That's what this Book teaches. Now here is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. The unique thing back in the Book of Leviticus was that this lamb had to be without spot and without blemish. It had to be perfect. Why? Because it typified the perfect Lamb of God, Jesus Christ who takes away the sin of the whole world. All you need to do is accept that substitute by faith and let Him do the atonement for your sins. He's already paid the price of

your redemption. He is the Saviour of the world.

The next passage is found in the eighth chapter of the Book of Acts. Here is the account of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. This eunuch is driving along in the chariot. Philip gets up there beside of him and lo and behold, this Ethiopian eunuch is reading something. It wasn't *Playboy*; it wasn't *U.S News and World Report*; it wasn't a newspaper; lo and behold, the Ethiopian eunuch is reading Isaiah 53! Philip said to him, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And the fellow said, "How can I except some man should guide me?" And so Philip preached unto him Christ Jesus, and he became so impressed. They were driving along and they saw some water and the Ethiopian eunuch asked for baptism. He said, "What doth hinder me from being baptized?" and Philip said to him, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." Oh, praise God for that. You know we've got people running up and down the countryside that think they're Christians, that never did believe with their heart. They've got a head belief – a head belief won't save anybody. A head belief won't get anybody to heaven. Philip said to the eunuch, "Do you believe with all your heart?" And Paul confirms it in Romans 10: "If thou shalt confess with thy MOUTH the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine HEART that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Do you know an individual can believe that George Washington was the first president of the United States and it won't do a thing to change his life. Now listen: You can believe in Jesus Christ just like that and it won't do a thing to you. You can believe that Jesus is the Saviour of the world just like you believe George Washington was the first president and it won't do a thing. Because it's a head process, it's an intellectual thing. Believe with your heart. There is a fundamental difference between believing with your head and with your heart and everybody can KNOW which kind he's got.

Now we would say something on the next passage, which is in First Peter the first chapter, a remarkable passage, indeed, where we have that great servant of Christ, Simon Peter, who did so many devious and peculiar things and yet when he got straightened out and turned by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, gave us such remarkable portions of the Holy Scripture. In the 19th verse of the first chapter of 1 Peter, he says, "But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you." And in the remainder of that chapter he unfolds again the truth about that Lamb of God. Now I forgot to mention one thing when I was over there in Acts 8 and I must back up and make reference to it, and it is this: While Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the WORLD in John 1, it becomes effective in an INDIVIDUAL's life

when he believes. You see, Acts 8 is the next occurrence of it and there is the account of an individual who gets saved by believing with all his heart. You know we've got some people today who are all hyped up over the social implications of the gospel. They say this is too slow, to try to get people saved one at a time, we must try to save society. We have to try to get people cleaned up; we've got to try to do away with crime; we've got to try to do away with politics; we've got to try to do away with this and that and oh,...I'm not saying we should not be concerned about crime and politics, but that is not the salvation that the Word of God proclaims. Do you believe it? Salvation is a personal conversion. Acts 8, the Ethiopian eunuch was converted one at a time. Now over here in Peter there is a further unfolding of this truth.

Now we are ready for Revelation. Revelation might properly be called the "Lamb Book" of the Bible. Now you all write down there on the first page of Revelation – "Lamb Book of the Bible." Who said so? Well, you decide for yourself. Let me point out this fact: the word *lamb* occurs exactly 32 times in the New Testament, and 28 of them are in the Book of Revelation.

Now you go to the fifth chapter of Revelation and you have that marvelous word occurring and reoccurring. For example, verse 6: "I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb." I believe John is seeing into the heavenly realm. He talks about a lion, then he talks about a Lamb. He sees Him here that had been slain; describes Him; the book that He opens many scholars believe is the Book of the Universe. The Book; nobody able to open it; the Lamb opens it. The Book of the Universe, and do you know why? It is because He will become the Lord of the Universe. He will sit on the throne of heaven forever and forever as the writer of the Book of Revelation shows. What a marvelous conclusion! You just look at the last two verses of the book of Revelation and see that. In the 21st chapter of Revelation you have the word five times, showing the Lamb of God in the exalted position of the eternity to come. And in Chapter 22, Jesus Christ the Lamb of God, high and lifted up and in the midst of the throne forever and forever and forever.

My dear people, I want you to see it, all the way from Genesis to Revelation. The little spark of a lamb caught in a thicket, and then the lambs for a family and then the lambs for a nation, then the Lamb for the world, and the individual application of it in Acts 8 and the resurrection of the Lamb in 1 Peter 1 and in Revelation the Lamb of God, the exalted one to rule the Universe of God forever. My dear people, it is this Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, whom we have come to worship and adore and whose message to expound – to the salvation of those who are not saved and the blessing of those who profess to be His children. ■

Is Anyone Listening?

By Chester Lehman

It is time to speak. A few lonely voices are sounding alarms about our unchecked dive into technological gadgetry. They will have to holler more loudly to be heard above the din of our cell phones.

A cell phone, of course, does have appeal. Were I stranded at the roadside on a blustery night with a flat tire, it might save my life. Forget that I have never been so stranded without any options for survival, neither has anyone that I personally know. I call this the “tyranny of the statistical blip.” This might happen, that might happen, and all the while I keep my phone in my pocket only for such an unlikely occasion. Now, while I’m waiting for the inevitable event to threaten my life, I may as well use the thing. Before I know it, it is such a part of my life that I can’t imagine living without it. Some writers have called this “function creep.” Put the microchip in the cow on the farm so we can more easily track disease, and since we have the technology in operation.... You get the picture – we end up taking a route we never would have considered in the beginning.

Furthermore, fifteen years ago a stranded motorist would have had to exercise resourcefulness, problem-solving with the materials at hand. When the resources weren’t available, there was something called prayer. Risk is, or was, a normal part of living, and it seems that the heights of delight are married to risk. (Climbing Mt. Everest is a little over the top.) Will coming generations be so insulated from risk that they seldom need a work of God? Will they be so dependent upon quick fixes from “out there” that they have no practical self-sufficiency? Will their biggest trials in life be slow connections? Will planning ahead and taking personal responsibility become archaic? It is worth thinking about.

Cell phones have mainstreamed rudeness. Flash the credit card to the cashier, all the while yapping about your daughter’s slumber party last night. Race down the church aisle (away from the altar) in the middle of the service, while everyone tries to decode your whispers. Or worse, pretend to be present to hear the words of God, while your own words are dancing over the screens. Attend the youth activity and ignore your host. Break the concentration of your fellow board members. Take someone’s bed overnight and quickly excuse yourself and your laptop. Very few can carry two conversations at a time, so when we leap from one exchange to an incoming one, we are essentially

telling the first person, “You are not as important at the moment,” often without the grace of a “please.”

Human productivity corresponds with periods of un-interrupted concentration. Those periods are now few and far between for many people. One study suggests that the amount of productivity lost in one day due to interruptions -- many from the cell phone -- is equal to the output lost because of one full sleepless night (“Busy Signals: Celling Our Souls”; www.therebelution.com). Beyond the busyness of hands, activity of the mind has been assaulted. We cannot afford deep thinking – we’d miss a dozen calls. When we pursue quietness, a hundred intrusions scream for attention. A. W. Tozer said decades ago before the advent of cell phones, “Modern civilization is so complex as to make the devotional life all but impossible. It wears us out by multiplying distractions and beats us down by destroying our solitude, where otherwise we might drink and renew our strength.... These modern playthings, like pet tiger cubs, have grown so large and dangerous that they threaten to devour us all. What was intended to be a blessing has become a positive curse. No spot is now safe from the world’s intrusion” (Of God and Men, 125-126). In addition to laming adults, the endless, meaningless “chatter” of our technological devices hinders the healthy development of our children’s minds. Attention spans are shriveling, learning disabilities are exploding, and pastors are wailing in their efforts to keep boredom at bay in the pews.

Being continuously available nurtures a certain pride. “I am needed!” None of us should be that indispensable, and very seldom are we that in truth. Could it be that the rush of self-importance in swooping up the snazzy gadget held snug against the hip is the real reason why so many of us have purchased tiger cubs? Or since everyone else has one, I dare not be left behind?

Cell phones have produced the “walmarting” of relationships – in other words, developing the universal at the expense of the local. We invest time and soul expression over a growing geographical spread, but we ignore the warm persons in front of our eyes – our family members, the minister, the cashier, pedestrians on the sidewalk – and we miss so many opportunities and shut out those who know and love us best.

The best kind of communication happens face-to-face. Body language, facial expressions and the eyes give

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Partial – Birth Abortion Ban Upheld by the Supreme Court

Editorial by Dr. Shelton Smith

On Wednesday, April 18, 2007, the United States Supreme Court handed down a decision which will ban the gruesome practice of partial-birth abortion.

The law banning the procedure had been passed twice by the Congress but was vetoed both times (April 1996 and October 1997) by President Clinton. In 2003 the Congress passed it for the third time, and it was signed into law by President Bush on November 5 of that year.

It was immediately challenged in the courts. Three U.S. District Courts – one in California, one in New York and one in Nebraska – all declared the law to be unconstitutional. The federal government appealed those rulings, and the issue wound up on this year’s docket at the Supreme Court.

The vote of the Supreme Court was 5-4. The majority opinion was written by Justice Anthony Kennedy. Forming the majority along with him were Justices Alito, Scalia, Thomas and Chief Justice Roberts.

Whether this will significantly reduce the actual number of abortions remains to be seen. The ruling is important because it does stop one way of doing an abortion. But you should know – it does not eliminate one particular method for doing an abortion.

“More than one million abortions are performed in the United States each year. . . . Nearly 90 percent of those occur in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy and are not affected by Wednesday’s ruling” (FOXNews.com).

In case you may have forgotten or have not known what the partial-birth abortion really is, here is a brief description.

“The Partial –Birth Ban Act bars a procedure in which, as typically used, an intact baby is delivered feet first until only the head is left in the birth canal. The doctor pierces the base of the infant’s skull with surgical scissors before inserting a catheter into the opening and suctioning out the brain, killing the baby. The technique provides for easier removal of the baby’s head. The law allows an exception if the mother’s life is threatened” (BAPTIST PRESS).

“President Bush, who nominated Roberts and Alito to the High Court, said he was pleased with the ruling, calling it an ‘affirmation of the progress we have made over the

past six years in protecting human dignity and upholding the sanctity of life. We will continue to work for the day when every child is welcomed in life and protected in law” (BAPTIST PRESS).

Maybe, just maybe, there is beginning to be restoration of sanity and decency to our society. We are not there yet, but perhaps this is a step in that direction. Consider Justice Kennedy’s further comment:

Doctors had testified in federal courts that they often do not describe either a technique known as dilation and evacuation (D&E) or the partial-birth procedure to women seeking abortion. And Kennedy said the government has an interest in making certain women are “well-informed.”

“It is self-evident that a mother who comes to regret her choice to abort must struggle with grief more anguished and sorrow more profound when she learns, only after the event, what she once did not know: that she allowed a doctor to pierce the skull and vacuum the fast-developing brain of her unborn child, a child assuming the human form,” he wrote. “It is a reasonable inference that a necessary effect of the regulation and the knowledge it conveys will be to encourage some women to carry the infant to full term, thus reducing the absolute number of late-term abortions.”

Kennedy also quoted a nurse who had witnessed a partial-birth abortion.

“The baby’s little fingers were clasping and unclasping, and his little feet were kicking,” the nurse was quoted as saying. “Then the doctor stuck the scissors in the back of his head, and the baby’s arms jerked out, like a flinch, like a baby does when he thinks he is going to fall. The doctor opened up the scissors, stuck a high-powered suction tube into the opening, and sucked the baby’s brains out. Now the baby went completely limp. . . . He cut the umbilical cord and delivered the placenta. He threw the baby in a pan, along with the placenta and the instruments he had just used” (BAPTIST PRESS).

The national media gave only passing note to the Court’s decision. The major networks spun the story to favor the abortion crowd, while many major newspapers buried the story deep inside their pages.

The ABC, CBS and NBC evening newscasts on Tuesday night all ran full stories on the Supreme Court's 5-4 ruling upholding the Partial-Birth Abortion [Ban] Act, but while each included arguments from justices in the majority, featured a soundbite from pro-life lawyer Jay Sekulow and offered at least a brief description of the procedure, they all framed the stories in ways favorable to those on the losing side.

All led into competing soundbites by putting abortion supporters on the side of "rights" – describing "abortion-rights supporters" versus "abortion opponents" – characterized the ruling as imposing a further "restriction" on abortion instead of as expanding protection for the unborn, and creatively distanced themselves from the "partial-birth" abortion term.

ABC's Charles Gibson saw "a long-sought victory for abortion opponents" before Jan Crawford Greenburg fretted that "abortion-rights activists were devastated." CBS's Wyatt Andrews highlighted how "abortion-rights supporters bitterly protested" since "the ban is now the first abortion restriction ever approved with no exception for the health of the mother."

NBC's Chip Reid related that "abortion-rights activists worry this may be only the start of a campaign to limit abortion rights."

...With "5-4 ruling upholds federal ban on so-called 'partial-birth abortion'" on screen, ABC anchor Gibson brought in ideology as he announced that "the court's new conservative majority today upheld a nationwide ban on a controversial procedure, one that critics call 'partial-birth abortion.'"...

Over on the CBS Evening News, Katie Couric referred to "a controversial late-term abortion procedure," and Wyatt Andrews reported on "what Congress called 'partial-birth abortions.'" (LifeNews.com)

None of this coverage is surprising. Anyone who has paid any attention to this debate over the years knows full well which side most of the media are on.

Every one of us needs to understand that politics, the judiciary and great issues like abortion are all closely related.

The ACLU and other liberals want the rest of us to "stay out of politics." If we sit idly by when liberals are trying to be elected to public office, we have merely aided and abetted the crime (when abortions are done).

The facts are – the politicians, namely, the presidents and the U.S. Senate, determine who sits on the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court then determines what's legal and what's not.

If "strict constructionist" judges are appointed, the liberal agenda will be thwarted and ultimately stricken down.

If "social activist" judges are appointed, then abortion and the rest of the liberal agenda move forward.

Roe v. Wade yet remains the law of the land. Babies are being butchered in the womb by the thousands every single day in the USA.

We must press forward! We must not remain silent while this horror continues unabated!

Reprinted with permission from
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context and meaning to words. Messages sent thru the air sometimes represent pure cowardice. It is far easier to "scorch" the screen than to look someone in the eyes and deliver our exhortations. "When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise" (Prov. 10:19, NASB). Once upon a time cheap words were associated with the weekly sewing circle, but now the daily catalog of our words would flood Niagra Falls. When precious hours are burned in the flapping of the tongue (or the clacking of the key), "What have I not done?" is a significant question.

For some of us the easy opportunities to bare our hearts bring about "prostitution of the soul." We gush to every Tom, Dick, and Harry what should have been said only to John. We have nothing left to give only to one in

true intimacy, no secrets and no treasures, because it has all been said before for all the world to consume, and that without any framework of trust or commitment. So much for the feminine mystique. Or masculine bravado.

I am aware that much of what I am saying may be applied to the jangler on the wall as well as to the one in the pocket. However, the important difference is constant availability, exponential degree. I cannot live my life attached to the wall. Basic language training may help somewhat, since the word "off" no longer exists in today's lingo. And if you can't find the off button, place phone on floor, raise foot high, and lower forcefully. "It is better for you to lose a connection than for your whole body to go wireless into hell."

The Importance of a Literal Interpretation

By Bruce Scott

Hermeneutics is the art and science of interpretation. When most readers open a newspaper or book, they assume the author intends for them to understand what he is saying. They also instinctively assume that, to understand what the author is saying, they must use a literal, or normal, hermeneutic: They must interpret the text literally or naturally, unless the context indicates otherwise.

Interpreting the Bible is no different. The goal is to understand what the human author, as he was moved by the Holy Spirit, intended to say. We do so by using a literal hermeneutic (even with passages dealing with end-times prophecies), unless the context indicates otherwise.

Unfortunately, much of Scripture, especially the Old Testament, is interpreted by replacement theologians who use what is known as the allegorical method. It assumes there is a deeper, more spiritual or mystical, understanding of Scripture beyond the mere literal understanding and that this hidden understanding is found only by those who are able to search out its secrets.

This mindset is especially prevalent when it comes to prophecy. With the allegorical method, prophecy is not to be taken literally but, rather, figuratively and symbolically.

The allegorical method, however, leads to several major errors:

1. Jesus' Comings. It is hermeneutically inconsistent. Replacement theologians interpret prophecies related to Jesus' First Coming literally, but prophecies related to His Second Coming they interpret figuratively.

2. Israel. The allegorical method fails to make clear, biblical distinctions between Israel and the church. Even though there are scores of biblical passages declaring that God has a distinct future for Israel, replacement theologians either ignore those passages or explain them away or apply them figuratively to the church.

They are eager to apply Israel's blessing to the church, but not so eager to apply Israel's curses to the church.

Additionally, if the church is now "spiritual Israel," as Replacement Theology claims, who is now spiritual Edom, Moab, Ammon, Philistia, Egypt, and

all other nations mentioned in the Old Testament?

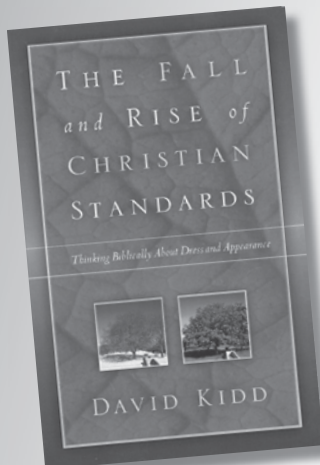
3. God's Character. The allegorical method also raises serious questions about God's veracity. If, in the Old Testament, God promised Israel a literal, earthly Kingdom, but He really meant a figurative, immaterial kingdom, what does that say about God's character? Does God deceive His people with literal promises and then hold them accountable for not recognizing that they were actually figurative?

In contrast, when a literal hermeneutic is used consistently, there results a consistent understanding of Scripture as a whole. Separate administrations of God's rule on Earth come to light. A distinct program for both Israel and the church is revealed (not two ways of salvation, but a distinct plan and program). New Testament revelation does not redefine Old Testament concepts.

In addition, a massive amount of unfulfilled, prophetic Scripture, especially in the Old Testament, is faced squarely and addressed. End times events begin to take shape and fall into their proper chronological places. And God's character is not impugned, but vindicated. His glory is seen as the chief goal of all of history.

A literal hermeneutic does not make these things so. Rather, it reveals them to be so.

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The Fall and Rise of Christian Standards

Thinking Biblically About Dress and Appearance

by David Kidd

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'Spoon-fed' Christians

by J. Mark Horst

Recently, I had the opportunity to sit among what I would consider a mature Christian audience for a time of teaching from the Bible. The speaker was urging us to engage the contemporary culture from a biblical perspective. As he began, I immediately knew that, if I was going to benefit from this time, I needed to focus singularly on what he was saying.

His presentation was engaging, entertaining, and convincing. He was able to present the truth in such a way that it went beyond stimulating the intellect; it stirred the spirit. As I sat and listened, I thought to myself, "now here is some meat I can take home and chew on."

While interacting with others after the presentation, I heard the following statement, or a variation of it, several times; "that was over my head!" I confess, some of what I heard went over my head too, but here's what I suspect may have happened.

Many Christians approach a teaching/preaching time with a preconceived set of ideas. We often expect those ideas to be reinforced by the speaker. If the speaker challenges our deeply held assumptions by asking the hard questions, we either tune him out or react instinctively to protect our positions.

In addition, though we may deny it, many of us want to be 'spoon-fed'. That is, we want our teaching given in bite-size morsels, perhaps even in liquid form; it is easier to swallow with little or no 'chewing'. When someone speaks at a level that calls for our undivided attention and serious contemplation, we quickly tire of the effort required to follow along.

Just prior to writing this article, I was listening to an audio recording of a sermon. The speaker said in his introduction, "When you leave here I want your mind to be tired." Now it is true that a good sermon will do more than engage the mind, it will impact the spirit. But in our western culture we are so accustomed to being entertained that we have largely forgotten how to engage the mind, to think critically.

I recall my mentor, Dr. J. Otis Yoder, saying, "To feed the sheep you have to put it where they can reach it." However, he did not shy away from stretching people intellectually and spiritually. While we should never preach/teach to impress others with our intellectual ability, neither should we shy away from calling Christians to a deeper understanding of biblical truth.

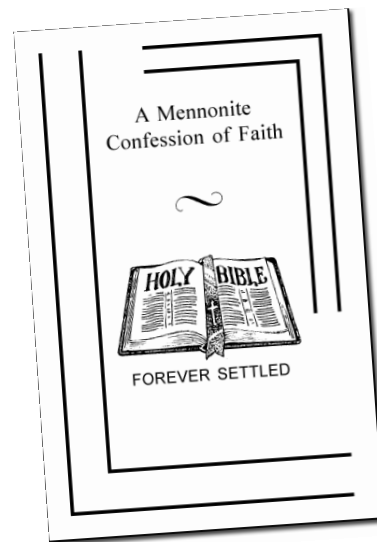
Let me ask you a few questions. If the pastor/teacher you're listening to uses a word you're not familiar with do

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you: ignore it, let your eyes glaze over, or look it up when you get home? If he makes a point you feel doesn't agree with Scripture do you: accept it because he's the pastor, ask him about it after the service, or check it out in the Bible for yourself?

Answering these questions will help you decide whether you are a passive (spoon-fed) or active listener.

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