

# Focus on the Kingdom

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## His Ashes Cry Out Against John Calvin

By Dan Corner

This article deals with a little-known but very important part of church history from the Reformation period. This information has been so concealed from the public in our day that very few people know anything about these appalling facts. Whistles need to be blown. Brace yourself for a shock.

On October 27, 1553 John Calvin, the founder of Calvinism, had Michael Servetus, the Spanish physician, burned at the stake just outside Geneva for his doctrinal heresies.<sup>1</sup> John Calvin, the originator of the popular doctrine of “once saved, always saved” (known in certain circles as “the perseverance of the saints”) violated the cry of the Reformation — “sola Scriptura” — by murdering a doctrinal “heretic” without scriptural justification. The killing of Servetus was something Calvin had planned long before Servetus was even captured. Calvin wrote to his friend Farel on February 13, 1546 (seven years prior to Servetus’ arrest). He went on record as saying: “If he [Servetus] comes to Geneva, I shall never let him go out alive if my authority has weight.”<sup>2</sup> Evidently, in that day Calvin’s authority in Geneva, Switzerland had ultimate “weight.” This is why some referred to Geneva as the “Rome of Protestantism”<sup>3</sup> and to Calvin as the Protestant “Pope of Geneva.”<sup>4</sup>

During Servetus’ trial, Calvin wrote: “I hope that the verdict will call for the death penalty.”<sup>5</sup> All this reveals a side of John Calvin that is not known and hardly

<sup>1</sup> “On only two counts, significantly, was Servetus condemned — namely, anti-Trinitarianism and anti-paedobaptism [infant baptism]” (Roland H. Bainton, *Hunted Heretic*, The Beacon Press, 1953, p. 207). Comment: Regarding his rejection of infant baptism, Servetus said, “It is an invention of the Devil, an infernal falsity for the destruction of all Christianity” (Ibid., p. 186.) Many Christians of our day could only give a hearty “Amen” to this statement made about infant baptism. However, this is why, in part, Servetus was condemned to death by the Calvinists!

<sup>2</sup> *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Baker Book House, 1950, p. 371.

<sup>3</sup> *The Wycliffe Biographical Dictionary of the Church*, Moody Press, 1982, p. 73.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Hole Fritchman, *Men of Liberty*, reissued Kennikat Press, Inc., 1968, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Walter Nigg, *The Heretics*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1962, p. 328.

appealing, to say the least! Obviously he had a prolonged, murderous hate in his heart and was willing to violate Scripture to put another to death and in a most cruel way. Although Calvin consented to Servetus’ request to be beheaded [thought to be better than being burned alive], he acquiesced in the mode of execution employed. But why did Calvin have a death wish for Servetus? “To rescue Servetus from his heresies, Calvin replied with the latest edition of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, which Servetus promptly returned with insulting marginal comments. Despite Servetus’ pleas, Calvin, who developed an intense dislike of Servetus during their correspondence, refused to return any of the incriminating material.”<sup>6</sup>

“Convicted of heresy by the Roman Catholic authorities, Servetus escaped the death penalty by a prison break. Heading for Italy, Servetus unaccountably stopped at Geneva, where he had been denounced by Calvin and the Reformers. He was seized the day after his arrival, condemned as a heretic when he refused to recant, and burned in 1553 with the tacit approval of Calvin.”<sup>7</sup>

“In the course of his flight from Vienne, Servetus stopped in Geneva and made the mistake of attending a sermon by Calvin. He was recognized and arrested after the service.”<sup>8</sup> “Calvin had him [Servetus] arrested as a heretic, convicted and burned to death.”<sup>9</sup>

From the time that Calvin had him arrested on August 14th until his condemnation, Servetus spent his remaining days “in an atrocious dungeon with no light or heat, little food, and no sanitary facilities.”<sup>10</sup>

Let it be noted that those responsible for burning Servetus in Geneva put half-green wood around the feet of the victim and a wreath strewn with sulfur on his head. It took over thirty minutes to render him lifeless in such a fire, while the people of Geneva stood around to watch him suffer and slowly die! Just before this happened, the record shows:

“Farel walked beside the condemned man, and kept up a constant barrage of words, in complete insensitivity

<sup>6</sup> *Who's Who In Church History*, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1969, p. 252.

<sup>7</sup> Steven Ozment, *The Age Of Reformation 1250-1550*, Yale University Press, 1980, p. 370.

<sup>8</sup> *The Heretics*, p. 326.

<sup>9</sup> *The Wycliffe Biographical Dictionary of the Church*, p. 366.

<sup>10</sup> John F. Fulton, *Michael Servetus Humanist and Martyr*, Herbert Reichner, 1953, p. 35.

to what Servetus might be feeling. All he had in mind was to extort from the prisoner an acknowledgment of his theological error [which readers of this magazine know was not an error at all but Jesus' own truth about GOD] — a shocking example of the soulless cure of souls. After some minutes of this, Servetus ceased making any reply and prayed quietly to himself. When they arrived at the place of execution, Farel announced to the watching crowd: 'Here you see what power Satan possesses when he has a man in his power. This man is a scholar of distinction, and he perhaps believed he was acting rightly. But now Satan possesses him completely, as he might possess you, should you fall into his traps.' [Well did Jesus say, "Those who kill you will think that they are doing God a service"!]

"When the executioner began his work, Servetus whispered with trembling voice: 'Oh God, Oh God!' The thwarted Farel snapped at him: 'Have you nothing else to say?' This time Servetus replied to him: 'What else might I do, but speak of God!' Thereupon he was lifted onto the pyre and chained to the stake. A wreath strewn with sulfur was placed on his head. When the faggots were ignited, a piercing cry of horror broke from him. 'Mercy, mercy!' he cried. **For more than half an hour the horrible agony continued, for the pyre had been made of half-green wood, which burned slowly.** 'Jesus, Son of the eternal God, have mercy on me,' the tormented man cried from the midst of the flames."<sup>11</sup>

Although we have essentially the same cry from the converted, repentant thief on the cross (Lk. 23:42-43, cf. Lk. 18:13) and Scripture says, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:13), Farel still reckoned Servetus an unsaved man at the end of his life: "Farel noted that Servetus might have been saved by shifting the position of the adjective and confessing Christ as the *Eternal* Son rather than as the Son of the Eternal God."<sup>12</sup>

"Calvin had thus murdered his enemy, and there is nothing to suggest that he ever repented of his crime. **The next year he published a defense in which further** insults were heaped upon his former adversary in most vindictive and intemperate language."<sup>13</sup>

As the Roman Catholics of 1415 burned John Hus<sup>14</sup> at the stake over doctrine, John Calvin, the Protestant,

<sup>11</sup> *The Heretics*, p. 327.

<sup>12</sup> *Hunted Heretic*, p. 214. Comment: Nowhere in the Bible do we see this sort of emphasis for one's salvation. The dying thief, the Philippian jailer and Cornelius were all saved by a most basic trusting-submitting faith in Jesus.

<sup>13</sup> *Michael Servetus Humanist and Martyr*, p. 36.

<sup>14</sup> John Hus attacked various Roman Catholic heresies such as transubstantiation, subservience to the Pope, belief in the saints, efficacy of absolution through the priesthood, unconditional obedience to earthly rulers and simony. Hus also made the Holy Scriptures the only rule in matters of religion

likewise had Michael Servetus burned at the stake. But was doctrine the only issue? Could there have been another reason, a political one?

"As an 'obstinate heretic' he had all his property confiscated without more ado. He was badly treated in prison. It is understandable, therefore, that Servetus was rude and insulting at his confrontation with Calvin. Unfortunately for him, at this time Calvin was fighting to maintain his weakening power in Geneva. Calvin's opponents used Servetus as a pretext for attacking the Geneva Reformer's theocratic government. It became a matter of prestige — always the sore point for any dictatorial regime — for Calvin to assert his power in this respect. He was forced to push the condemnation of Servetus with all the means at his command."<sup>15</sup>

"Ironically enough, the execution of Servetus did not really bolster the strength of the Geneva Reformation. On the contrary, as Fritz Barth has indicated, it 'gravely compromised Calvinism and put into the hands of the Catholics, to whom Calvin wanted to demonstrate his Christian orthodoxy, the very best weapon for the persecution of the Huguenots, who were nothing but heretics in their eyes.' The procedure against Servetus served as a model of a Protestant heretic trial...It differed in no respect from the methods of the medieval Inquisition...The victorious Reformation, too, was unable to resist the temptations of power."<sup>16</sup>

Is it possible for a man such as John Calvin to have been a "great theologian" and at the same time to act in this reprehensible way and afterwards show no remorse? Dear reader, do you have a heart that could, like John Calvin, burn another person at the stake? Do you approve of this brutal murder?

Let us illustrate this another way. Suppose a man from your congregation with a reputation for being a spiritual leader captured your neighbor's dog, chained it to a stake, then used a small amount of green kindling to slowly burn the dog to death. What would you think of such a person, especially if he afterwards showed no remorse? Would you want him to interpret the Bible for you? To make the matter even worse for John Calvin, a person, unlike a dog, is created in the image of God! Like it or not, we can only conclude from this evidence that John Calvin's heart was darkened, and not enlightened, as a result of his murderous hate for Servetus. At best, Calvin was spiritually blinded by this hate and therefore, spiritually hindered from rightly expounding the word of truth.<sup>17</sup> At worst, which was

and faith. See *The Wycliffe Biographical Dictionary of the Church*, p. 201.

<sup>15</sup> *The Heretics*, p. 326.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 328, 329.

<sup>17</sup> For example, in clear contrast to the meaning that Jesus

apparently the case, John Calvin himself was unsaved, according to Scripture:

“But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars — their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death” (Rev. 21:8).

“We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, ‘I know him,’ but does not do what he commands is a liar and the truth is not in him” (1 Jn. 2:3-4).

“And you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding [continuing] in him” (1 Jn. 3:15, NKJV).

The Greek adds an important word to 1 John 3:15 sometimes omitted in English translations. That word is “continuing” or “abiding” (NKJV) and states that murderous people don’t have eternal life continuing in them.

Dear reader, since murderers are unsaved and John Calvin was a murderer, then Calvin was unsaved! Moreover, since the unsaved are darkened in their spiritual understanding (Eph. 4:18) and Calvin was unsaved based on Scripture, then was not Calvin darkened in his spiritual understanding? Jesus said we can “know” people by their fruit (Matt. 12:33) — be it John Calvin or anyone else! Similarly, the Apostle John wrote:

“This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the Devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother” (1 Jn. 3:10).

Can you say Calvin did what was “right” regarding Servetus? If not, then doesn’t this make him a “child of the Devil” according to this verse and others already cited? Though some will rant and rave over this conclusion, can we scripturally come to any other?

No other evidence is needed to objectively assess Calvin’s spiritual status. However, two other men should also be briefly mentioned:

“Two other famous episodes concerned Jacques Gruet and Jerome Bolsec. Gruet, whom Calvin considered a Libertine, had written letters critical of the Consistory and, more serious, petitioned the Catholic king of France to intervene in the political and religious affairs of Geneva. With Calvin’s concurrence he was beheaded for treason. Bolsec publicly challenged Calvin’s teaching on predestination, a doctrine Bolsec, with many others, found morally repugnant. Banished from the city in 1551, he revenged himself in 1577 by

publishing a biography of Calvin that charged him with greed, financial misconduct, and sexual aberration.”<sup>18</sup>

How should a heretic or any false teacher be dealt with, that is, if one is willing to abide by the biblical guidelines? Paul wrote Titus and touched upon this very issue, which first starts out as a qualification for eldership in the church:

“He [the elder] must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach, and that for the sake of dishonest gain” (Titus 1:9-11).

Clearly, then, a false teacher should be “silenced,” not by having him killed, as Calvinism’s founder did, but by refuting him with Scripture. This is the true Christian method. [Readers should bear in mind that Calvin was the heretic as well as the one who burned the holder of Truth about God at the stake!]

If Calvin’s example is the standard, the next time the Jehovah’s Witnesses or Mormon missionaries come to our door, we should physically overpower them, bind them to a stake, and make human candles out of them. Can you imagine a professing Christian doing this, much less a reputed theologian? If done, could you force yourself to believe such a person was truly saved and adhere to his unique doctrinal distinctives?

Also, false teachers should be openly named as Paul openly named Hymenaeus and Philetus who were destroying the faith of some of the Christians whom Paul knew: “Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some” (2 Tim. 2:17-18).

Why did Calvin grossly violate these scriptural guidelines? Since Paul’s holy spirit-inspired directives (and example) regarding how to deal with a heretic were diametrically opposed by Calvin, isn’t it safe to assume that Calvin was governed by a different spirit than Paul had? Moreover, why have these facts about John Calvin’s life rarely been mentioned in our day? The answer to this last question is obvious. They are both an embarrassment and refutation of Calvinists who proudly refer to themselves by his name! Since they are the evangelical majority and it is their power and influence that has the greatest sway over what is disseminated

gave of the parable of the weeds in the field (Mt. 13:24-43) where the Lord told us “the field is the world” (v. 38), John Calvin taught “the field is the church.” See Calvin’s verse by verse commentary on Matthew’s gospel.

<sup>18</sup> *The Age of Reformation 1250-1550*, pp. 368,369.

Bolsec’s book in which he charges Calvin as he did is cited as *Histoire de la vie, moeurs, actes, doctrine, constance et mort de Jean Calvin*, pub. a Lyon en 1577, ed. M. Louis-Francois Chastel (Lyon, 1875).

throughout our land and even the world, this information about their founder is seldom, if ever, heard. Many people are only now learning the shocking facts about Calvinism's founder as they read them for the first time!

"No event has more influenced history's judgment of Calvin than the role he played in the capture and execution of the Spanish physician and amateur theologian Michael Servetus in 1553. This event has overshadowed everything else Calvin accomplished and continues to embarrass his modern admirers."<sup>19</sup>

Three important questions remain: (1) Can John Calvin be scripturally justified for murdering Michael Servetus? (2) Does a murderous hate, according to Scripture, render one spiritually unable to accurately interpret the Scriptures? (3) Can a murderer be saved according to Revelation 21:8?

All these answers have a bearing on the credibility of Calvin's popular "perseverance of the saints" doctrine, among others. Regretfully, Calvin's version of Christianity is the prevalent view in our land, but is his view Scriptural? To answer in the affirmative is to say that Calvin's double predestination is true, that is, some are predestined for Heaven [Heaven in the Bible is nowhere the destination of the saved — ed.] and others are predestined for Hell without free choice on their part!<sup>20</sup> This would violate many Scriptures, especially 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

Furthermore, Calvin's teachings declare Jesus' work on the cross was not infinite, because according to that teaching, he did not shed his blood for every human, but only for the elect — those predestined to be saved. This is clearly refuted by 1 John 2:2: "He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."

Also, his "perseverance of the saints" doctrine would assert that God's power will keep a truly saved person secure, in spite of grievous sins committed after regeneration and/or any doctrinal heresies that would be embraced, thus violating many scriptural examples and warnings which prove the opposite!

It should be apparent that, from the founder down to us today, the "perseverance of the saints" doctrine (most commonly known as "once saved always saved") has often been a "license for immorality" taught under the banner of grace (see Jude 3, 4). As Calvin's own theology allowed for his actions against Servetus, many in our day are sexually immoral, liars, drunkards, filled

with greed, etc., while they profess salvation. This is a ramification of Calvin's perverted grace message — a teaching which has "spread like gangrene" from a man who could openly burn another to death and for the remaining 10 years and seven months of his life, never publicly repent of his crime.

"Servetus' ashes will cry out against him [Calvin] as long as the names of these two men are known in the world."<sup>21</sup>

Responses to this article from [www.evangelicaloutreach.org/ashes.htm](http://www.evangelicaloutreach.org/ashes.htm)

"One year ago, while taking a European History class, I chose to do a final project on the Reformer John Calvin. After gathering all the facts I could find in books, I turned to the Internet for the latest information. What I found was an article titled, 'His Ashes Cry out Against John Calvin.' Shortly after reading it, I changed my topic from John Calvin to Michael Servetus. Interested by this story and seeing much of your information came from Bainton's book *Hunted Heretic*, I searched madly for a copy through used bookstores, for about a year. One day, I received a letter that I might purchase a copy for a not-so-high amount, and amazingly the copy was signed by Bainton himself. I'm back at this web site, scratching up information for a friend on his report on Calvin. **The whole point of this is that I would just like to thank you for giving me a brand new point of view on John Calvin. This web site has one thing that many don't, and that is credibility.** Thanks again."

"On Monday I received a phone call from the chairman of the board of the church I pastor. Brother Phil was upset some of his fellow Christian school board members were pestering him about not being a Calvinist. They were saying his simple Bible believing faith was naive and he needed to study John Calvin to understand what it means to be saved. He asked me for help. Well, I had long ago in college studied Calvin and decided his position on predestination was not in line with the clear teaching of Scripture. I had two funerals to do this week and no time to prepare anything. But I located your work 'His Ashes Cry Out Against John Calvin' on the internet. **I read this work word for word to the men's Sunday School class and the reaction was universal: They all exclaimed: Who needs a murderer to teach Bible doctrine?** Thank the Lord that your article 'His Ashes Cry Out Against John Calvin' headed off a very divisive issue. I am waiting to hear what the school board members think when they read 'His Ashes Cry Out Against John Calvin'! Again, thank you."✧

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 369.

<sup>20</sup> Augustine of Hippo, the Catholic theologian, was an earlier proponent of predestination from whom John Calvin drew ideas.

<sup>21</sup> *The Heretics*, p. 328.

## God's Immortality Program Inviting You to Reign with Jesus in the Kingdom and Live Forever

The biblical program of salvation begins with repentance (a complete change of mind orientating ourselves to God's immortality plan for us and the world) — repentance before God and faith (belief) in Christ Jesus (Acts 20:21). Repentance means responding not only to the death and resurrection of Jesus, but to Jesus' own missionary and evangelistic Gospel *about the Kingdom* (Mark 1:14-15; Acts 8:12, etc.). We prove our repentance by our obedience (Acts 26:20) and by grasping the Kingdom of God Gospel (Matt. 13:11, 19; Luke 8:12, etc.) and living from it.

Repentance means committing ourselves to obedience to Jesus and his teachings, words (Heb. 5:9; 1 Tim. 6:3), what Paul called "the obedience of faith" (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). The Lord Jesus taught that the road to life is "narrow" and demanding and only a "few" will find it (Matt. 7:13-14). Some believe they are "saved," but afterwards fall away (Luke 8:13; John 6:66; 1 Tim. 1:19 etc.), and are thus not saved! In other words, after initial commitment to the Kingdom Gospel as Jesus preached it (Mark 1:14-15), we must endure to the "end" to enter the Kingdom of God, when it comes at Jesus' return (Matt. 10:22; Heb. 3:14). We escape the lake of fire (Rev. 2:10-11). Eternal life ("life in the age to come") comes through the spirit as a "downpayment" to those who believe Jesus' Gospel of the Kingdom (Mark 1:14-15). This happens when believers accept the Gospel of the Kingdom as Jesus preached it, *including* of course Jesus' death and resurrection, for salvation (Mark 1:14-15; John 3:16; 6:47; 1 John 5:12-13; Acts 8:12). A much fuller gift of the spirit will be granted to the saved at the resurrection when immortality is finally bestowed on the faithful of all the ages. This will happen at Jesus' return (1 Cor. 15: 22, 23).

It is important to emphasize one aspect of salvation since many seem unaware of it. This is because of the very misleading teaching about "eternal security" ("once saved always saved"). According to apostolic teaching, eternal life is also a hope (Titus 3:7), yet to be realized (Gal. 6:8-9) in the age to come of the Kingdom (Mark 10:30; Rom. 13:11). Life forever is only for the ones who persist in doing good (Rom. 2:7) and do not grow weary and give up (Gal. 6:9; Luke 8:13).

If a "saved" person sows to gratify his sinful nature he will reap death (Rom. 8:13; Gal. 6:8-9). The prodigal son is a clear example of this (Luke 15:24, 32). The end result of sin is death in the lake of fire, so *do not be deceived!* (James 1:14-16). Hebrews chapters 6 and 10 are warnings describing the fate of those who do not persist to the end. God has promised never to forsake us as we remain faithful to Him until the Son returns. ✧

## Effective Bible Study: "Connecting the Dots" Ineffective Bible study is breaking the golden chain of understanding

The Bible was meant to be understood. Those marginal text references (a must for all Christians) often effectively take you from one passage in Scripture to a related passage. Thus the Bible frequently interprets itself. Scripture illuminates Scripture. The invaluable secret is to combine passages which bear on the same subject. The *opposite* technique is to refuse such connections and thus frustrate good understanding. If a given word or phrase has a certain meaning in, say, every one of its ten occurrences, it is most probable that this is its meaning in a final appearance of that same word or phrase. If one insists on a different meaning in that final occurrence one runs the risk of destroying Scripture's power to inform us of truth and guide us to right understanding! Thus we lose the mind of Christ and the spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:16).

Here are two practical examples of right and wrong method. In the Hebrew Bible (the "Old Testament") the festivals and sacred times practiced by Israel are referred to some ten times as **holy days (annual), new moons (monthly) and Sabbaths (weekly)**. These may appear in either order, ascending or descending. The point is that the three *together* are the standard biblical way of informing us about a calendar with annual, monthly and weekly observances. The three items form a whole.

In the teaching of Paul, which is in fact the teaching of Jesus-in-Paul, we are warned about any teacher who would require us to observe certain rules pertaining to food and drink and, most importantly, invite us to embrace matters of **feasts/holy days (annual), new moons (monthly) and a Sabbath day (weekly) (Col. 2:16-17, RV)**. This warning comes after a long passage in which Jesus-in-Paul speaks of circumcision as a spiritual and no longer a *physical* requirement (as in Gen. 17). Paul's point is to fend off all teaching which would impose on believers items of obedience which belonged to the Old Covenant made with Israel. New Covenant Christians are not to submit themselves to such impositions — in this case matters of eating and drinking, and equally matters of calendar, annual, monthly or weekly. It is possible to "obey Moses" and disobey Jesus!

The "trio" of three observances, reflecting the same previous ten or so occurrences of the same "trio," are called by Jesus, speaking through Paul, a **single "shadow"** (Col. 2:16-17). Just as Paul said that Adam is a type of the one who was to come (Rom. 5:14), so the three observances — annual, monthly and weekly — **are** a shadow of the things which were to come, in this case Christ who has come. The Christian dispensation

was introduced at the first coming of Jesus. The shadow of Old Covenant observances is negatively contrasted (“but the body belongs to Christ”) with the now risen Christ, who fulfills and replaces the temporary shadows. Christians are urged not to return to the shadows.

Even huge denominations like the Seventh Day Adventists fell for a deceptive trap here. Based on a vision claimed by their lady founder, they insisted that one third of this trio of observances (the weekly Sabbath) was strictly binding on the conduct of Christians. The *weekly* Sabbath could not, they said — breaking the precious chain of understanding — be included in the trio! They disregarded the whole chain of references to the trio as covering all three observances. This false move meant that the trio so often mentioned no longer had any weight. It was discarded in favor of the founder’s supposed “vision.” But visions ought not to contradict Scripture.

Adventists could see that if the *weekly* Sabbath was included in the trio, described by Paul as a shadow, then that weekly Sabbath was of no consequence to those living in the light of Christ, now risen and coming again. Unfortunately the move by which the *weekly* Sabbath was disconnected from its companion annual and monthly festivals led to a fixed dogma — obligatory weekly Sabbath keeping — which remains an untouchable tradition of some 23 million across the world.

Another self-appointed leader of a denomination, Herbert Armstrong, working from inadequate skills as a Bible interpreter, made his followers keep both the weekly sabbath and the annual festivals. This further fragmented believers. Inevitably, some few could see that the new moons were not less important, and so they try to observe them! In all these cases the retrogression to Moses entailed a failure of obedience to the teachings of Jesus-in-Paul. It is a subtle but unfortunate method, which urges obedience to Moses in the name of Jesus. Paul labored most of his ministry to teach his converts the clear difference between two different covenants (Gal. 4; 2 Cor. 3) (For further details, see our *Law, Sabbath and New Covenant Christianity* free at our site.)

If the weekly Sabbath is not part of that trio, then the previous 10 occurrences (in the Hebrew Bible) of that trio are allowed no control over our thinking. Worse than that, Paul, speaking for Jesus, would have said “Let no one take you to task in the matter of annual, monthly and annual observances.” “Tom, Dick and Harry” would become the obvious nonsense “Tom, Dick and Tom” or “One, two and one”!

Application of the golden rule of chain reference, one text explaining another, could have prevented the monumental division and the founding of whole denominations. Christians ought by now to have learned to celebrate the resurrection on the first day of the week

(which is not a transferred Sabbath). Sunday, the day of the resurrection, is the third day since Friday (Luke 24:21). There is an eighth day of new beginnings. The seventh-day sabbath was a fundamental part of the sabbatical system, including the land-sabbath, given to Israel under Moses.

In Matthew 24, we are blessed with the great and final discourse of Jesus, warning us about what to expect and announce as events to precede his future arrival (his Second Coming, Parousia). Jesus offered a rather simple sequence of events in answer to the good question, “When will these things be and what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?” (Matt. 24:3). Jesus did *not correct* the disciples’ question (but critics are often quick to do this!). Rather the master rabbi answered with a clear definition of what to expect: “When you see the Abomination of Desolation standing where **he** ought not to...” (Mark 13:14: see the best translations and commentaries). Jesus went on, “For there will be a tribulation such as has never happened since the beginning of the world and will never happen again” (Matt. 24:21). “Those days will be a tribulation” in which it will be hard for pregnant and nursing mothers (Mark 13:19, NIV, NLT). Then: “*Immediately after* the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened” — and then the arrival of Jesus in glory (Matt. 24:29-31).

Jesus expressly referred to the book of Daniel as the basis of his forecast, and it is right there in Daniel 12:1, 11:31, 12:11 and 9:27 (and 8:13) that we find the corroborating details of how the Great Tribulation and Abomination fit into the end-time scheme. There are in fact 13 references, either quotations or allusions, to Daniel in Matthew 24. Imagine the chaos when commentators do not connect the dots from Matthew to Daniel! If the chronological place of the Great Tribulation in Daniel 12:1 (Jesus’ reference in Matt. 24:21) is ignored and ditched, then the results in misunderstanding Jesus in Matthew 24 are apparent and devastating. The Great Tribulation, beautifully located and defined as a short burst of agony *just before the resurrection* of the dead (Dan. 12:1-2), is redefined at the whim of the commentator. The precious chain of understanding is broken. Matthew 24:21 is properly defined by Daniel 12:1. ✧

## Comments

“I have just finished reading your first article in *Focus*, Vol. 11 No. 11. I also believe that the Father is the only God and my mind went back to a conversation with my mother-in-law and her brother who are staunch Trinitarians and believe Jesus is God. They also believe that Jesus is returning but can’t believe in the resurrection of the people, so what is Jesus supposed to be coming back to do? They won’t check anything and

only read in the Bible what they want to and what the *Daily Bread* teaches them to believe. It's so frustrating, Anthony, that people won't check the Bible for the truth. It is like their belief in going to heaven. I said, do you think God would want people in heaven to look down at the terrible things going on here? How would a grandmother like to look down and see her grandson kill another child? The look of pity they gave me! I'm just thankful once Jesus *does* come back with his Father's Kingdom and establishes it that people will learn the truth. It is said what a world it would be if everyone was united in the same beliefs. When Jesus returns, I say hurray to that! I had to get that off my chest." — *England*

"I just wanted to thank you for the excellent articles you have provided in the *Focus* magazine. I am truly grateful to God for your diligence in seeking out the truth from God's word. I came out of the Worldwide Church of God in '96, and floundered for several years. Then I began to study again, having to sweep away all former beliefs, and start from scratch. I went back to the Bible. I came to see that there is no Trinity, no Binity, that Christ always referred to one God, his Father and 'the only one who is truly God' (John 17:3). I have found that understanding this simple truth is an isolating, lonely process. I have been praying continuously for guidance, since I have difficulty sorting out the translations and many sources have their Trinitarian bias. I see that the God-family idea is a falsehood. God bless you for expounding on these things with such detail and clarity. I now know who I can turn to when I have questions about the text." — *from email*

"I was pleasantly surprised to see your response. God is so good and your email provided much needed encouragement. Thank you so very much for taking the time to answer. The way I learned about non-Trinitarian beliefs was through the Christian chat boards. I entered one of the threads that was Trinitarian vs. non-Trinitarian, and boy my eyes were sure opened! I had no idea about how much was involved. There was a man there who was valiantly trying to explain to people that the Trinity is not in the Bible. He was being viciously attacked. I could not believe the vitriol. It was palpable and ugly. I made a few posts and was immediately accused: 'You're not saved because you don't believe Jesus is God.' Much to my surprise I could not bring myself to type the words 'Jesus *is* God,' which would have put an end to his attack on me. Actually I did not know what I believed at the time, so I talked to my husband about it. We started studying in earnest and looking very carefully at this whole subject. These studies really turned our world around, and we now have a much better understanding of who Jesus is and what he did for us. I started posting in agreement with the man and also got attacked. I didn't understand the violent

reaction because it seemed so easy to me to see through the veil of deceit being presented in the church. Wow, what a lesson in human behavior this has been for us. I knew Jesus said we would be persecuted for our faith, but I really didn't expect the persecution to come from other Christians.

"Even my sister has stopped talking to me. She sent me a video by Lee Strobel titled *Case for the Christ*. I watched it and told her in an email that it was very interesting. I included a long list of things Jesus did, and told her this is what I believe. Each statement started with 'Jesus was the only man to...' (I think I found it on the 'Truth or Tradition' website). She responded, 'I have thought about this and it troubles me that you believe that Jesus was only a man. Please keep studying and do not be led astray.' She included these verses: John 1:1, John 1:14, and John 14:9. I responded with what I've learned, and now I think I'm on her ignore list. Oh well, she responded the same way when I told her Jesus is still Jewish, and he certainly never came to introduce a new God, one different from the single God of his Jewish heritage.

"Oh yes, you had asked where we fellowship. My husband and I are both retired Border Patrol Agents, and at one time we thought we would be spending our time ministering in the little church we went to. We even went on a mission trip to Nigeria with our pastor, and it was a truly awesome experience. My husband was being groomed to be a pastor, and even had an excellent jail ministry. But everything changed when the pastor learned that we did not think like he did about who Jesus is. We were kicked out. Since that time we have studied at home. We read the Bible every day, and have our own Bible study. My goodness, I didn't mean to carry on so. My mind is going faster than my fingers can type, and there is so much more I would like to say, and questions I would like to ask. Once again I would like to thank you for all the time and research you did to present the facts so well. You have had a positive impact on our lives and have strengthened our knowledge of the one true God, and His Son, our Lord and Savior." — *New Mexico*

Guess what is in the news today! A highly influential Muslim author met with the reorganized Jewish Temple personnel. They discussed the possibility of a temple where all Muslims, Jews and Christians could worship in peace. This could be rebuilt in one year.

We invite everyone to listen to live streaming of Bible studies at our church gathering at 10:30 am EST on Sundays, at [www.livestream.com/rkitect](http://www.livestream.com/rkitect)