

## OF READING AND BEING READ

by Dalton Key

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account” (Hebrews 4:12,13).

As students of Scripture, we must do more than merely read the Bible; we must allow the Bible to read us.

We emphasize regular, systematic Bible reading. And well we should. But this should never be seen as the end of it all but rather as just the beginning! Anyone can mechanically read the bare words of the Bible text - after all, the Bible is written on a third-grade reading level and has its average word consisting of fewer than five letters - but of what use are these God-breathed words if we are not changed and made better by them?

David spoke of his ardent affection for the Holy Scriptures, describing them as more desirable than fine gold, and then added these important words: “In keeping them there is great reward” (Psalm 19:10,11). Israel’s sweet singer was not content with merely reading or knowing what God had said; he saw the benefits in applying God’s word to his own life.

As we peer through the portal of this book into the very mind of the Almighty, we see ourselves as well, as in a mirror. As we compare our reflection with God’s perfect will, we see the true self, both as it is and as it is intended of heaven to be. “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of

liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does” (James 1:22-25). Whether we apply God’s word or not, one thing is certain; as we honestly read it, we are being read by it, just as our faces are seen by a mirror.

May we never become guilty of seeing the Bible as little more than a reference book, a philosophical tome, or yet another dry description of human history. This book must be allowed to pierce us, to read us, to discern us, and ultimately to transform us. It is, after all, God’s book.

Never forget: if you’re are not being read, YOU’RE NOT truly reading.

## SATAN’S HOUR WAS SHORT LIVED

by Milton Smith

After Satan had successfully tempted Eve to commit that infamous sin in the Garden of Eden, God proceeded to pronounce a curse upon Satan. God said in Genesis 3:15: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.” Most biblical scholars agree that the metaphorical bruising of Jesus’ heel represented a coming, temporary setback that would be inflicted upon Jesus by the prince of darkness, while the bruising of Satan’s head by Jesus (the seed of Woman), represented utter and complete defeat of the wicked one. Jesus won an eternal victory over Satan by His resurrection from the dead, while Satan’s only so-called “triumph” over Jesus was our Lord’s temporary death upon the cross.

It seems accurate to say that this was Satan’s hour.

Luke 22:53 tells us that when Jesus’ enemies approached Him in the garden to arrest Him, He said to them, “This is your hour, and the power

of darkness.” Satan is the prince of darkness. Paul tells us in Ephesians 6:12 that we do not struggle against flesh and blood, but against the “rulers of the darkness of this age,” the “spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” Paul also tells us in Colossians 1:13 that God has delivered us from the “power of darkness” and has “conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.”

The suffering and death of Jesus would be the one, and the only, triumphant hour of this evil prince of darkness.

Jesus bore our sins when he died, but he also bore our sins by His pain and suffering. He was bearing our sins when He was still alive on the cross, and He was bearing our sins when he was scourged and beaten. Isaiah 53:5 reads, “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed.” It seems that even when Jesus was being spat upon, He was suffering for our sins. While

His suffering for man’s sins did not begin on the cross, it did end there.

Thus, it is accurate to say that Satan’s hour was short-lived. Jesus now enjoys eternal triumph over the wicked one, and those who choose to obey and faithfully follow the Savior will forever be a part of our Lord’s eternal victory!

— Tulsa, OK

# Old Paths

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“ask for the old paths” (Jer. 6:16)

## BAPTISMAL MYTHS

by Dalton Key

Though the subject of baptism is treated frequently within the New Testament’s pages, and always with candor and clarity, strange ideas - baptismal myths - continue to be advanced by many people attempting to justify their aversion to this required, biblical practice. Consider the following examples:

“You were baptized in your way; I was baptized in my way. What difference does it all make? After all, one baptism is just as good as another.” The sincere souls re-baptized in Acts 19:1-5 would beg to disagree, as would the inspired Apostle Paul, who unequivocally wrote, “There is one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5).

“Baptism is a symbolic act, merely confirming the fact that I have already been saved by faith alone.” The Bible teaches something vastly different. After speaking of the salvation Noah and his family experienced in the ark from the great flood of that day, Peter continues by saying, “Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you” (1 Peter 3:21, ESV).

“I just don’t understand how water can wash anyone’s sins away.” This myth contains a grain of truth, but is really more an attempt at misdirection. While true that water, any water - even the water of baptism - has no intrinsic power to save; and while true as well that only the blood of Jesus Christ has this power (Revelation 1:5), the vital question is this: when does one come in contact with the blood of Jesus? At the time of his conversion, Paul (who at this time was known as Saul), was commanded, “Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins” (Acts 22:16).

“Baptism may be necessary, and I’ll probably be baptized someday, but there’s no hurry.” With salvation hanging in the balance; with everything to gain and nothing but your sins to lose; yes, with heaven pleading and friends praying, the words of Ananias to Saul still ring out: “And now why are you waiting?” (Acts 22:16).

## JESUS IS OUR SAVIOR – ABSOLUTELY!

by Wayne Robbins

After the fall of man and sin came into the world, God began His plan for the salvation of man. He would send someone into the world that would save man from his sins (Genesis 12:1-3; 22:18). From that time forth the theme of the Old Testament is “someone is coming.” When we get to the New Testament the theme changes to “someone is here.” But being removed so many years from New Testament times, how do we know that Jesus is the actual Savior? Thank God for our New Testament that reveals how we can know that Jesus is the real Savior. Let us notice. . .

JESUS IS OUR SAVIOR BECAUSE OF THE MIRACLES AT HIS BIRTH. Notice the following: Angels appeared to Mary and Joseph announcing the birth of Jesus (Luke 1:26-35; Matthew 1:13-25). Mary, a virgin, gives birth to Jesus (Luke 2:1-7). Angels appear to shepherds announcing Jesus’ birth (Luke 2:8-18). And a star appears to wise men of the East showing them where they can find the Savior of the world (Matthew 2:1-2; 10-11).

JESUS IS OUR SAVIOR BECAUSE OF THE MIRACLES AT HIS DEATH. Notice these: The darkness that came at midday while Jesus was on the cross (12:00 to 3:00 P.M.) (Matthew 27:45). The ripping of the temple curtain from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51). The earthquake that split the rocks, opened graves, and saints were resurrected (Matthew 27:52-53).

JESUS IS OUR SAVIOR BECAUSE OF THE MIRACLES AT HIS RESURRECTION. Notice the earthquake (Matthew 28:2). Notice the appearance of the angels (Matthew 28:3). Especially note the empty tomb (Mt. 28:1; 28:7).

These miracles prove conclusively that Jesus is the Christ and our Savior. We can exclaim with the Centurion who witnessed the death of Jesus, that “Truly this was the Son of God” (Matthew 27:54). - Arkansas City, KS

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence” (Colossians 1:15-18).

“And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

## OUR BEST YEAR YET!

by Dalton Key

The new year of 2026 has begun. What we make of it will be up to us.

The time elapsing from this year's dawn to next year's will amount to a little over one percent of an average lifetime. For those in their twilight years, twelve months seem to pass rapidly while bearing significant weight; the same span for younger souls seems to move more slowly and is often given little thought.

Much can happen in a year's time. Some may have their lives and reputations forever soiled because of bad decisions, while others may have their lives strengthened and built up over the course of this same year as they live in submission to God and under the influence of His word.

The first Psalm encourages meditation on God's law "day and night" (Psalm 1:2). Centuries later the Bereans were commended for having "searched the Scriptures daily" (Acts 17:11). Notice what these two passages hold in common: (1) the importance of the study of the Scriptures, including genuine meditation upon them, joined with (2) a daily and continued practice of doing so.

As we look forward with faith into the unwritten pages of the year before us, may we resolve to spend regular, daily time with the Bible, the Book of all Books. May we invest quality time in meditation in the Bible's truths. And further, may we resolve to order our lives in the doing of what we learn.

Better decisions come from better instruction. "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing himself in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does" (James 1:22-25).

With the Lord's help and with the Bible's direction this year can be our best yet!

"Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:12-14).

EDITORIAL . . .

## THE LORD'S DAY, A DAY FOR WORSHIP

by Dalton Key

Sunday, the first day of the week, is meant of heaven to be more than another busy, pleasure-filled, weekend play-day. This day deserves better than seeing Christians lazily sleeping in or lounging idly about the house.

And why? because the first day of the week is not ours. This day belongs to the Lord, and from New Testament times it has been divinely designated as a day for worship.

The apostle Paul lingered seven days in Troas, until "the first day of the week," when he met with the saints of that city in an assembly of worship (Acts 20:6,7). John, that "disciple whom Jesus loved," wrote, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day" (Revelation 1:10). Early saints would regularly "come together as a church . . . on the first day of the week" (1 Corinthians 11:18; 16:2). They would assemble on the Lord's Day to partake of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:20-34), to admonish one another by singing (Ephesians 5:19), to pray together, led by the men (1 Timothy 2:8), to give of their means as prospered (1 Corinthians 16:2), and to hear God's word proclaimed (Acts 20:7).

Is it any wonder why? Our Lord rose from the dead on the first day of the week. (Matthew 28:1-6). The church was established on Pentecost Day, always a first day of the week (Acts 2). Yes, this day, the Lord's Day, is more than ordinary. It is special.

Justin Martyr, one of the early and reputable historians of the early church, noted the worship of Christians near the beginning of the second century: "On Sunday a meeting is held of all who live in the cities and villages . . . They rise together and send up prayers." Pliny the Younger, in a letter to the Emperor Trajan, wrote of Christian worship in roughly the same time period, reporting, "They were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as a god, and to bind themselves by oath, not to some crime, but not to commit fraud, theft, or adultery, not falsify their trust, nor to refuse to return a trust when call upon to do so."

The first day of the week, the Lord's Day, is a special day, and it is now as it was always - since the Resurrection - meant to be: a day for assembled worship.

(THANKS! As we begin our 50th year of continued publication for Old Paths, please know how grateful we are to you for reading, for your words of encouragement, and for generously supporting this venture over the past half-century. With the Lord's providence and the help of friends like you, we will do our best to keep on keeping on! Thank you!)



## HATE THE SIN AND LOVE THE SINNER

by Danny Tunnell

God hates sin. God hates sin just as a father hates a rattlesnake that threatens the safety and life of his child, or as a mother hates a venomous spider that is found on the soft, warm flesh of her little baby.

The Bible says, "These six things the Lord hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren" (Proverbs 6:16-19). We can't love what God loves and not hate what He hates.

God hates a proud look. Pride underlies all sin. "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). God hates a lying tongue. He hates the shedding of innocent blood. He hates murder (Exodus 20:13). He hates a heart that devises wicked plans. He judged the world in Noah's day (Genesis 6:5-7). God hates feet that are swift in running to evil, people who openly and flagrantly violate God's law. God hates a man or woman who sows discord among brethren. That applies not only

to the church, but also to the office, the shop, or at home. "Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit" (Psalm 34:13).

Not only are we to hate what God hates (sin), but we are also to love what God loves (the sinner). We are to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Christians have the love of God inside them, so it shouldn't be that hard (Romans 5:5).

Clint Eastwood is a very strong advocate and proponent of the belief that Jesus is the only way to heaven. He often quotes John 14:6, where Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no one comes to the Father, except by Me." Eastwood has not always held that belief. The 95 year-old actor describes what happened: "A friend of mine, I won't name names, but someone who I had known for years, had gently, persistently talked to me about Jesus, not in a preachy way, not in a way that made me feel judged or cornered, just in a way that made me curious. I'll be honest, my first reaction was skepticism. I'm a logical guy, I like evidence, I like things I can see and touch and understand. My friend said, 'Clint, you've made a

career out of telling stories, but what if the greatest story ever told is actually true? The simple, profound truth that God loved the world so much that He sent His only son?" Clint said, "That really got me to thinking, I started reading the Bible, really reading it."

If we approach someone in the wrong way while he is still rebellious, he may become more rebellious. Chester Smith and Hazel Houser wrote these words: "There are so many wandering out in sin. Just a little longer, please Jesus. A few more days to get our loved ones in. Family scattered here and there and Lord we love them dear. Maybe we can help them find the way."

When you sin and fall short, as we all do, go ahead and hate the sin and love the sinner (yourself). If you are a Christian, confess your sin and repent. (1 John 1:7). No matter how bad the sin is, God's grace and mercy is greater (Psalm 86:5). Don't keep kicking yourself over past mistakes (Philippians 3:13,14). Be good to others, but also be good to yourself!

— Miami, OK

## Here Am I: Send Me

by Joe Slater

somebody else!" The Lord did, indeed, send someone else (Aaron), but Moses himself still had to go. Aaron went along as his spokesman. Moses finally accepted his responsibility and fulfilled his assignment magnificently.

Lesson: You don't have to do everything yourself; it's OK for others to help you. But you must do your part!

Both Isaiah and Moses completed their work; they didn't quit part-way through the process. Perseverance and determination characterized these and other heroes of faith.

Jesus rebuked the church at Sardis because they failed to finish what they had begun. "I have found none of your works perfect [complete] before God" (Revelation 3:2). Despite their reputation for being a lively congregation, the Great Physician pronounced them dead! (Revelation 3:1).

May each of us zealously answer the call of God by saying, "Here am I:

Send me!" And may we persevere with determination so that God's will may be done, His name may be glorified, and we may enter Heaven by His grace!

— Springfield, IL

"And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men" (Colossians 3:23).

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